



# NORTH AFRICA

*By*

ALAN HOUGHTON BRODRICK

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CRESCENT OF ISLAM

As you fly westwards you strike desert at Jodhpur perched on a red rock; then come, in quick succession, the lunar landscapes of southern Iran cutting into the glassy waters of the Persian Gulf; the sands of Mesopotamia split by narrow ribbons of grey-green vegetation meandering along the lines of the Twin Rivers—there is the distant mound of Babylon and here below you the great arch of Ctesiphon—you are in the real realm of Islam the Religion of the Sands. In less than three hours you skim over the five hundred miles of pebble wilderness that divide Baghdad from Damascus. Then you leave behind you the gardens and orchards of *Es-Shems* and, skirting the mass of Mount Hermon, you strike diagonally across the dullness of Palestine and the serpentine windings of the Jordan fringed with dusty scrub. Mount Carmel is underneath you and soon, after a stretch of Mediterranean, you are among the sand dunes and flies of Alexandria.

The Italians made you leave Cyrenaica to the north. The thirsty waste of inner Libya is broken with hummocks, hills, and rocks peppered with stunted shrubs. Then you land among the stucco dreariness of Benghazi. The next stop is at the shacks and hangars of Castel Benito, which is the airport of Tripoli but far from the town itself and out of sight of its dazzling whiteness fringed with palms.

Now you head north-west over the shallow, shimmering seas of the Gulf of Gabès or the Little Syrtis. The water is so clear that the bed shines with patches of bright emerald, lapis lazuli or sapphire and, as you look down on them, the Kerkennah Islands are hardly

distinguishable from their surrounding reefs, shoals, and sandbanks. You glide over the Tunisian shores between the vastly thick thousand-year-old walls of Sousse (that was the Roman Hadrumentum) and the millions of olive-trees that surround Sfax. Jutting into the sea between the two towns is Mehdiya just off which, a generation ago, was found the treasure-ship of Sulla whose bronzes and marbles fill a hall in the Bardo Museum at Tunis. Inland to your left you can distinguish, gaunt and alone on its sandy plain, El-Djem, the best preserved of all ancient Roman amphitheatres.

You are hovering over classical Africa, the *Ifriqiyyeh* of the Arabs, the land that gave its name to all a great continent.

If you come to Tunisia in the spring-time you are in a new world of gracious hills and valleys. The ruined Roman towns—Dougga, Sbeitla, Bulla Regia and the rest—stand out with pillar and portico against a landscape of infinitely pleasing pistachio green slashed with great fields of fresh flowers, madder, orange, purple, mauve, saffron and cornflower blue. You are exhilarated as you have not been since you left the wonderland of China and here is something much nearer to our understanding. You are on your own classical soil. You feel at home, at least for a short while, until you realize that you have not yet reached the farther horn of Islam's crescent that stretches from Senegal to Sinkiang across the world's belt of sands. Beyond you still lies all the "Island of the Maghreb".

"*Maghreb*" or "Western Land" means in Arabic all that country between the borders of Egypt and the Atlantic coast of Morocco. As thus defined the Maghreb falls into two distinct zones. To the east are the sands and rocks of Libya relieved only by a few coastal and inland oases and by the isolated upland of western Cyrenaica. The rest of what we must still

call Italian Libya is essentially a waterless plateau, not very high, though varying in altitude. In places the plateau reaches the sea, although generally the long serrated line of bare brown cliff lies some miles inland.

Towards the west the Island of the Maghreb is something quite different. It is a huge mountain system running from south-west to north-east that for want of a better name we may call the "Atlas Complex". It is a series of spines, ridges, and ranges that in the west widen out to enclose the relatively fertile plains of Atlantic Morocco and as you go eastwards converge to form the mass of hills and intervening plateaux that make up the major portion of inhabitable Algeria and Tunisia. South of this well defined region (that is the "Barbary" of our forefathers) the hills and mountains fall away, often quite abruptly, to the Sahara.

In this chaos of bare and rugged mountains there are many ranges but two main chains (1) the Maritime Atlas from just east of Tetuan in Spanish Morocco (where it is called the Rif) to Cape Bon in Tunisia (the finger that points out towards Sicily less than 100 miles distant) and (2) the Inner Atlas running from Cape Ghir on the Atlantic coast of Morocco and merging into the Maritime Atlas in eastern Algeria. Towards the south, the Atlas drives spurs into the northern Saharan region.

This is Barbary. A piece of Mediterranean Europe backing on the Sahara. It belongs to the so-called "White Africa" that anthropologists deny is "Africa" at all, since between little White Africa and the immensity of Black Africa lies the barrier of the Sahara. The whole history of the continent has been conditioned by the existence of a great wilderness that has prevented the seeping of civilization southwards. Until camels were introduced from Asia about the second century B.C. the barrier of the Sahara was impenetrable and consequently the infiltration of negroes and tropical

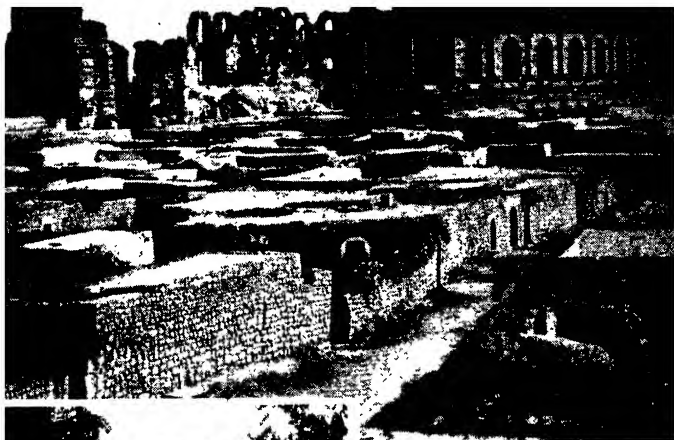


produce negligible. For the past two thousand years, however, Barbary has been increasingly influenced from the south both by the influx of black men and women and by the stream of caravan-borne products of the tropics.

King Victor Emmanuel III said, in conversation with the American Ambassador at Rome after the Italian occupation of the coastal regions of Libya in 1912: "We have got the bone of the chop." The Maghreb may, in fact, be likened to a huge loin chop of which Morocco is the best meat, the narrow lands of Algeria and Tunisia the edible but sparse flesh on the bone and Libya the bone itself devoid of nourishment—at least for men.

The Barbary that men can live in is, for the most part, a ribbon of land, two thousand miles long and never, save in the west of Morocco, more than 100 miles wide.

Throughout its history this region has nearly always been a provincial outpost and never the seat of any considerable native culture. At times, Barbary has been prosperous enough but generally in terms of close dependence upon foreign connexions. It was a vague hinterland for the sea-borne commercial empire of the Carthaginians. It was a Roman province whose penetration by Roman civilization was slight and patchy. It was a causeway between the two great centres of Arab empire, Cordova and Baghdad, the capitals of the Western and Eastern Caliphates. When one capital collapsed the corridor became a blind alley and so remained until our times.



## I. ROMAN AFRICA

1. AMPHITHEATRE, EL-DJEM  
(*E.N.A.*)
2. ARCH OF ALEXANDER SEVERUS,  
DOUGGA (*Wide World*)
3. AQUEDUCT, ZAGHOUAN  
(*Paul Popper*)



## CHAPTER II

### THE SOIL OF BARBARY

**B**ARBARY would not have remained so long a land closed to outsiders had its soil and products been of obvious and immediate value.

You often hear disgruntled French colonists declare that Barbary is *une terre maudite* and, indeed, much of it is undoubtedly very salt. The commonest name for a torrent in Algeria is *wadi melah*, that is the "salt stream". Even where you have an exceptionally deep, rich soil, as in the alluvial Algerian plain of the Chécliff, the water that is sucked up to the surface there evaporates as a carbonate of lime crust which has (if it is not too thick) to be broken before the land can be cultivated.

Marshal Lyautey said of Morocco "Le Maroc n'est pas la vallée du Nil : il n'est, non plus, une de ces terres d'Amérique où il n'y a qu'à semer pour récolter et même plusieurs fois par an. Non, c'est une terre . . . qu'il faut, selon la parole de l'Ecriture, cultiver à la sueur de son front . . ." and Morocco is the orchard and garden of Barbary.

The story about Africa (that is, roughly, the modern Tunisia) having been the granary of Rome is fully true only in a metaphorical sense. The bread that the imperial government distributed together with circus tickets to the Roman people was paid for by the product of a special tax levied on certain provinces. Among these was Roman Africa whose impost brought in, on an average, about enough to feed 350,000 people.

The dry-farming, that the Carthaginians seem already to have practised, has made of Algeria something much less arid than it was at the time of the French occupation a hundred years ago, but life is a continuous struggle. Even the Atlantic plain of Morocco is only fertile compared with the rest of the Maghreb. The small area of

northern Tunisia is, indeed, almost unique in Barbary, but here again, the capricious rainfall sometimes makes the years lean enough.

Barbary has not even good and reliable grazing grounds. The famed Barbary sheep, like the men and all the other animals of the land, are incredibly hardy, but every few years an appalling drought that no irrigation works can fend off, blights the country and the sheep and cattle wither and rot in multitudes.

The beasts of Barbary have always been small and stunted. The Numidian and Mauritanian elephants that Hannibal used were, it would seem, not much larger than those of Sumatra. The bull, the horse, the ass and the lion of the Maghreb are almost of dwarf proportions.

The seventeen or eighteen million men who to-day live in Barbary appear to constitute a maximum in present conditions, for their land is eminently one of ill-balanced economy and seems destined to be complementary to others.

Eloquent chroniclers tell us that in earlier times you might travel all the way from Tangier to Tunis under the shade of trees. This may have been only an exaggeration of the truth but it is difficult to believe it now. In any case, the look of the vegetation has quite changed. To-day one of the commonest of trees is the eucalyptus. Orange, lemon, and mandarin trees were introduced by the Arabs in the Middle Ages. Euphorbia, it is true, seems to be indigenous but most of the more showy and colourful shrubs and plants are recent immigrants—bougainvillaea, jacaranda, strelizia and Judas trees. . . .

Agriculture, in Roman Africa, depended, as in our own land, upon exportation that brings money into the country but does not build up its economy, for the money goes, very largely, into developing the crops and products that sell well in foreign markets. During the '20s and '30s of this century, for instance, Algeria was

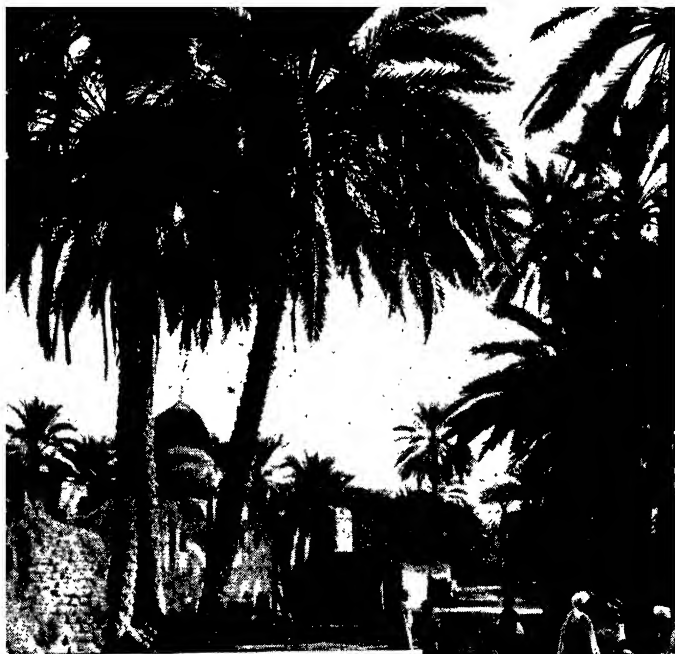
very prosperous. There was a wine boom that has been almost forgotten, for nothing remains to remind one it ever existed save thousands of acres of deserted and desiccated vineyards which were planted in response to the increased demand for Algerian wines.

It is difficult to see how Barbary can ever become an important industrial centre. The French, in their present poverty and semi-isolation, are driven to the strangest devices in order to contrive petty little local *ersatz* industries. No large reserves of hydraulic power can be built up for the torrents of North Africa are both too erratic and too feeble. Lack of local fuel is the most serious handicap to any manufacture. There is practically no coal, lignite, or shale in Barbary. The Kenadsa coalfield in south-western Algeria is insignificant<sup>1</sup> and produces coal of wretched quality. Although under the stress of urgent necessity the exploitation may be now better carried on, up to the fall of France the mines were inefficiently run under State management. The Djerada field of so-called "anthracite" near Oudjda was not worked until two years ago. The deposits are said to be fairly extensive and enough fuel to be brought up to supply the very few railways in French North Africa. This, however, is probably a pious anticipation for as late as June 1941 most of the engines were burning a good deal of wood.

Mineral oil in Barbary is at present merely a vague hope. The small but much talked-of field near Petit-jean in the north-western part of French Morocco has produced only insignificant quantities of petroleum.

French North Africa, on the other hand, has the greatest prospected phosphate deposits in the world. There is plenty of iron and in the Atlas Mountains there is cobalt and there are traces of other armament metals. There seems to be a good deal of zinc and lead still to be found in the old Roman workings.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 89.



## II. IN BARBARY

1. A STREET IN BISKRA  
(E.N.A.)

2. SNOW ON DJEBEL HEBRI,  
MOROCCO  
(A.H.B.)

Iron ore and phosphates piled high in red and grey hillocks are the most striking sight in the North African ports, but the mines of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco depend upon distant industrial centres where there is an abundance of fuel or upon far-off markets for the sale of the phosphates, not one hundredth part of which can be utilized at home.

In Barbary you can grow grapes, citrus fruits, and early vegetables, you can make olive oil and reap alfa grass and cereals. You can dig out minerals. You can shear sheep and provide enough food from beasts to feed the population (although this would generally necessitate much transport for there is often a drought somewhere or other in the land) and in good years wheat and meat can be exported, but the quality of the latter is poor.

Beyond this you cannot go much, and even profitably to exploit these resources Barbary must be economically interlocked with lands abroad. In normal times our imports of North African produce, especially of citrus fruits and alfa grass, were considerable and growing but both geographical contiguity, political ties and customs barriers demand that French North Africa should be complementary to France. The problem has, hitherto, been that so many of the essential products of North Africa are those of France herself, whereas those things of which France stands most in need, normally, are either lacking in Barbary or produced only in sufficient quantities for local consumption.

However, during the drain of the conquerors' requisitioning and the strain on the resources of unoccupied France (the least rich portion of that country) both from wastage into the occupied zone and from the presence of several million refugees, North African products in spite of transport difficulties have been god-sends to metropolitan France.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THREE DIVISIONS OF BARBARY

THE desert belt of Africa has undergone, in the past, many changes of climate and, consequently, of aspect. It has been a region of marsh and lagoon. It has been covered, in part, with grass and forest. It has been traversed by mighty rivers.

In the cool, moist climate of the Late Pleistocene (that is during the epoch of the last Ice Age in Europe) North Africa supported an abundant plant and animal life and men roamed far and wide over the land. Three different types of stone implements remain to show us that in those distant days Barbary fell roughly into three divisions corresponding to the Roman provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauretania, or the modern Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, while the Moroccan area, even many thousands of years ago, was noticeably more primitive and conservative in tool technique (and therefore, perhaps, in way of life) than the regions lying farther east.

For ages past, progressive desiccation has spread both north and south of the Sahara but the encroachments of the wilderness are more noticeable in the north. It was most probably increasing dryness that drove men into the hitherto uninviting swamps of the Nile valley there to establish the only civilization indigenous to African soil.

The history of Barbary may be said to begin with the Phoenician colonization of the Western Mediterranean that goes back to the middle of the twelfth century B.C. Carthage, although the most famous of the Punic settlements in North Africa, was not the most ancient. Utica (a little to the north of Carthage), the two Hippos (that is the present-day Bizerta in Tunisia and Bône in



Algeria) and Leptis Magna (Homs) in Libya are all older than Carthage.

From prejudiced and hostile chroniclers we know a good deal about what they wanted us to think concerning the fall and annihilation of Carthage. Of the rise to power of the mighty City-State, of its inhabitants' mode of life and of the mainsprings of Carthaginian prosperity we know little. As the Carthaginians lived by ships, close communication with Phoenicia seems to have kept culture and customs closely like those of Tyre and Sidon. Carthage lived little upon the hinterland of her vast commercial empire in Africa.

What then was the extent of the Punic influence upon the Berbers and upon their land? Inscriptions in Punic writing and language dated long after the Roman conquest, are not uncommon. There is evidence that Punic lingered on as a popular tongue right through Roman and Byzantine times. In Roman Africa it may well be that Punic speech was as widespread as is Arabic to-day, while Latin was as current as French. In the more out-of-the-way places Berber was probably the only language in common use. In these circumstances, the switch-over from one Semitic tongue (Punic) to another (Arabic) would not have been uneasy. The area of Berber speech has been gradually reduced ever since the Moslem conquest in the seventh century, but probably a third of the people of Barbary still speak Berber as their mother-tongue.

From the East has come all the culture of the Maghreb. A Semitic speech is still the sole vehicle of culture. Men still profess an oriental religion and they still wear, almost unchanged in cut and design the oriental dress that they have worn since earliest historical times.

In 146 B.C. the Roman Republic established itself for the first time in Africa and by the time that Caesar landed at Hadrumetum (the modern Sousse) in 46 B.C. all urban

*Africa* (that is Tunisia) had been at least superficially Romanized. With the annexation of Mauritania by Claudius in A.D. 42, Roman North Africa reached its greatest extension and until the Vandal conquest in A.D. 430 the limits of the imperial dominion changed but little.

For three hundred years of Roman sway, North Africa, although often disturbed by revolts, enjoyed, on the whole, peace and prosperity. The African Christian Church was established by the second century and St. Cyprian, famed for his true Berber individualism and for his opposition to claims of pontifical supremacy, held the primatial see of Carthage in 257. From the beginning of the fourth century the Christian community of Africa was split by the Donatist "heresy" that was in large measure a protest against the centralizing tendencies and the sacerdotalism of the growing Catholic tradition, although it was also a movement of rebellion against the serfdom into which the native population was degraded by the extension of large estates among which those of the Catholic Church became increasingly important. Together with the Catholics, the Donatists were decimated by the Arian Vandals in the fifth century but the existence among the Christians of Africa of the two warring factions whose quarrel, although nominally doctrinal, was also due to economic conditions, facilitated the wholesale conversion to Islam that followed the Arab invasions.

Roman Africa was no colony for surplus population since, when Barbary had come to be subjugated, Italy, like France two thousand years later, had already a falling birth-rate. The "Romans" of North Africa, also like the "French" of to-day, were mostly citizens by naturalization. Before, during and after the Roman domination, the more isolated communities remained faithful to their Berber customs and many to their Neolithic culture. Piracy was the trade of most of the

coast-dwellers as it was to remain for twenty centuries more.

Roman Africa evolved no art style. Just as all the buildings to-day except the humblest huts are copies of Eastern models, so the public buildings of the Roman period, massive, majestic, and magnificent as many of them are still, were just Italian edifices planted for purposes of political prestige on the soil of Africa. Roman North Africa was a highly artificial thing since the mass of the Berbers resisted the attempts to Romanize or to civilize them, although it is probably true that the attempts were not very seriously undertaken. The French have to face much the same set of problems with, however, very different material means at their disposal.

North Africa passed under Byzantine sway when the capital was moved to Constantinople, but in 429 the Spanish Vandals overran the whole of Barbary which after Genseric's pillage of Rome became the centre of a Vandal empire that lasted until Justinian's general Belisarius led Gelimer the Vandal king in triumph through the streets of the capital and Barbary became a Byzantine exarchate.

Mohammed died in 632. In 641 the Arabs fell on Egypt and soon afterwards overran Libya as far as Cyrenaica.

As long as the Caliph Omar lived, the Horsemen of Allah ventured no farther to the west but in 647 under his successor Othman they swept round the desert shores of the Gulf of Syrtis and through Tripolitania entered Tunisia. The imperial Exarch was defeated and slain. Surprised by the evidences of wealth he saw around him in so arid-seeming a land, the conqueror asked the captain to explain the riches of the country. The Berber bent down and tendered—an olive-stone.

But Justinian's fortresses held out all over Africa. The Berbers collaborated with their masters against the

invaders. After another Arab expedition in 660, the conqueror Okba ben Nafi swept through the whole Maghreb, but it was not until 698 that the Byzantine garrison at Carthage surrendered and European and Christian rule in Africa came suddenly to an end. By 708 there were no more imperial troops, partisans or indeed Christians in Barbary and the new converts formed the bulk of the troops that poured over the Straits of Gibraltar, and carried Islam into Europe. For by 712 the Arabs had not only subjugated all Barbary but they had crossed over into Spain on their career of conquest.

The Omayyad Caliphs of Damascus (under whom the conquest of Africa had been achieved) ruled Barbary from Kairouan (the Moslem town in central Tunisia founded in 670) through Emirs directly appointed from Syria. When in 750 the Omayyads were overthrown by the Abbasids and the seat of the Caliphate was moved still farther away from Barbary to Baghdad, the hold of the Caliphs' government on the Maghreb became slack. In 788 a revolt broke out in Morocco that resulted in the establishment of a native dynasty of sultans whose direct authority was, of course, confined to a relatively small part of the country, but Morocco has ever since been in theory independent even if under disguised foreign control since 1912.

Meanwhile Harun-al-Rashid's emir at Kairouan threw off his allegiance to the Caliph of the "Arabian Nights" and set up an independent realm that stretched from Tripolitania to western Algeria so that the Maghreb was divided into two autonomous states. Later this eastern state was subjugated by a dynasty known as the Fatimites who afterwards passed on to Egypt, founded Cairo in the second half of the tenth century, and the better to mark their independence of the waning Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, set themselves

up as anti-Caliphs. The Fatimite hold on their western provinces weakened, however, with the transfer of their capital from Kairouan to Cairo. In 944 one of the governors of the central Maghreb founded the town of Algiers and central Algeria became an hereditary emirate in his family until the Norman invasions of North Africa in the middle of the twelfth century.

During all this ebb and flow of conquest and this rising and falling of empires and petty states only one thing really changed the face of the land and modified the life and the customs of the people. That was the incursion of the Beni Hillal.

The first Arab conquerors brought little Arab "blood" into the country. The newcomers were men and soldiers. They mated with the women of the country and although the Maghreb was in its more accessible parts superficially "Arabized" and although the Faith of Islam was implanted throughout Barbary, life went on, for the common man, much as usual and the general economy of the country was still recognizably what it was under Roman sway. Although little enough was done to improve the land or the lot of those who lived on and off it, things jogged along as they had done after the barbarian invasions of Europe, that is to say men lived on the impetus given by Imperial Rome. The barbarous Bedawin no more than the Germanic invaders destroyed all the economy of their conquests.

The wild desert tribes (of which the Beni Hillal have been best remembered) had been giving so much trouble in Upper Egypt that in 1048 the Fatimite Caliph induced these wild men to betake themselves off westwards. Each man was given a camel and a gold piece and in return gave his word never again to return to the East. The Beni Hillal pillaged Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Kairouan, and swept through the Maghreb, as Ibn Khaldun says, "like a cloud of locusts". They destroyed all the sources of the old prosperity. The

olive groves and the irrigation works were laid waste. Most of the new-comers settled in Tripolitania and Tunisia but many pressed forwards even to Morocco. Thenceforth, when the riches of Spain failed, the men of the Maghreb turned to the piracy that had always been one of their callings and found in it their principal industry. Piracy it was that made the men of Barbary the scourge of the Mediterranean for centuries and piracy finally brought about European intervention and European control. Only now is the land beginning to recover from the wasting of the Béni Hillal. This was the real Arab invasion and from these ferocious bandits comes the little real Arab "blood" most men in Barbary may boast of.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELIGION OF THE SANDS

ISLAM is the religion of the desert places of the earth and of their fringes. The lands of the Faith stretch from Senegal to China, down through India and away to Insulindia. The Faithful number, perhaps, as many as 300,000,000 and unlike the adherents of other cults they form a solid block. Their centre is the Holy Cities of Arabia. Islam alone of the missionary faiths has not withered in the land of its birth and once the religion of the Prophet has entirely conquered a country it has never yet been ejected therefrom. No missionary enterprise affects it. Cardinal Lavigerie founded the Order of the White Fathers to evangelize the Moslem populations of Barbary and the headquarters of the organization is still at Carthage. With the exception, however, of a batch of orphans the Cardinal himself adopted and baptized—they were soon merged into the Franco-Italo-Mediterranean mass of Tunisian Chris-

tians, so alike physically are the men of Barbary to the other peoples around the Inland Sea—the White Fathers have made no converts from Islam. The activities of the Order are now, very successfully, devoted to conversions in the Great Lakes district of Black Africa.

Islam is a social system as well as a religion (as we usually understand the word) and it is a social system which gives to the believer a conviction of equality with all other believers and a sense of superiority over all non-believers. Men are not lightly going to give up so satisfying a thing.

North Africa is overwhelmingly Moslem. The Christians are all of recent importation and mostly of European origin. There is, however, a relatively large Jewish minority and certain trades and callings (e.g. banking, money-lending and the manufacture and sale of jewellery)<sup>1</sup> are in their hands, for the Koranic prohibition of usury still holds for orthodox Moslems. The Jews are of ancient settlement in North Africa (although an appreciably considerable proportion of the European immigrants has been Jewish). The head of the Jewish community on the island of Djerba off the coast of southern Tunisia told me that his people had been there since the reign of Titus! The antagonism between Moslem and Jew that dates from the time of the Prophet himself has never died down and this mutual dislike is a factor to be reckoned with in any

<sup>1</sup> French and foreign Jews in Morocco are subject to the provisions of the French anti-Jewish laws—with some slight modifications. Moroccan Jews, subjects of the Sultan, have had their lot decided by a dahir in August 1941. As in France, they cannot be bankers, commission agents, journalists or engaged in the Press or the Radio. Moroccan Jews can, however, exercise all handicrafts and retail commerce. Moroccan Jews may not make loans (even non-commercial loans) in any circumstances.

The Algerian Jews were not at once assimilated to those of metropolitan France, and in August 1941 General Weygand set up a special department to deal with Jewish questions.

judgement of the situation in Barbary. Numberless Jews adopted Islam after the conquest and conversions are still not infrequent, especially among Jews of lowly position in whose opinion the benefits they may derive from their community are outweighed by the advantages to be obtained by conforming to the faith of the multitude. The Moslems of Barbary are, however, more than usually suspicious of converts.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BERBERS

WE know little concerning the men who made the flint instruments that are to be found in such profusion all over Barbary. Whatever may have been the intermingling streams of race in the past the *Maghreb* is, to-day, a region of mixed types in which the "Mediterranean" predominates, that is to say people who are slender, rather short, dark and with long heads and generally long faces. Indeed, together with Spain, Portugal and the western islands of the Mediterranean Sea, Barbary is the area where the population is more "Mediterranean" than anywhere else. These North Africans we call for want of a better name "Berbers".

The Berbers have, of course, been almost everywhere influenced by Arab infiltrations although the amount of Arab "blood" is less than is often supposed. Some tribes affect to be of "pure" Arab origin. Such claims are quite groundless. Again, although apparently "typical" Arab features are not uncommon, it must be remembered that, basically, the Arabs of Arabia and the Berbers of Barbary are both "Mediterraneans". It is in the proportion of admixture of other stocks that they are differentiated.



One of the things that most strikes the traveller in Barbary is the "unoriental" appearance (if we discount the misleading disguise of dress) of many of the natives one meets. The European look of the Berbers becomes more and more marked as you move westwards. In the towns of Tunisia, perhaps, most of the men would not look out of place in Cairo or Damascus. In the countryside of northern Morocco you are astonished at the number of men (and women for they are often unveiled) who might pass for Scots among a population that sometimes looks more northern than southern European. The town-dwellers of Barbary are, in the main, "Arabized" in language, way of life, and in culture. The country-dwellers are often, in the more remote mountainous parts of Algeria and Morocco, purely Berber in speech and in custom. Between the two are the shifting masses that, by a number of gradations, range from nomadic seemingly Arab tribes of the interior to the superficially Arabized Berbers (often bi-lingual) of the plains between the mountain ranges. Generally speaking, as regards the non-urban population, the "Arabs" are nomads and the Berbers (by way of life) settled mountain agriculturalists. There are, of course, some sedentary "Arab" tribes in the countryside and some nomadic Berbers. It is, however, difficult to distinguish, among these country-dwellers, between Berbers who have become "Arabs" and those who of remote Arab origin have maintained their traditions with a large admixture of Berber "blood" and even from such tribes who have, in some cases, become "Arabized".

As you go west the Berber influence becomes increasingly noticeable and the area of Berber speech grows ever nearer to the towns. There are now no Berber-speaking groups in Libya and Berber speech, during the last few generations, has died out where, in Tunisia, it last lingered. Algeria, however, contains many

Berbers who either do not know or who do not ordinarily use the Arabic language and more than half the population of Morocco has remained Berber in custom, in way of life, and largely in language.

The Berber social organization still survives unaltered in many of the mountain districts of Algeria and Morocco. The village enjoys complete administrative autonomy in all local matters. Two or more village communities, united by rather loose ties, go to make up a "tribe" and a collection of "tribes" is known as a "confederation". Formerly, in time of war, a leader of the confederation was elected as dictator. The peculiar feature of the village life is the *sof* or confraternity for mutual aid—something like a primitive edition of a Chinese *tong*. Each village has two *sof* rivals that serve to foster the team spirit like that displayed at House matches. Such ultra-democratic social conventions are sharply opposed to those of the desert Arabs. The French have, in many parts, left the old organization intact and the tribe is made responsible for maintenance of secondary roads, the upkeep of mosques, tombs of saints and schools, the collection of taxes and the application of the traditional arbitration in civil matters.

Although the Berbers present to-day such a variety of physical types they have, throughout their history, displayed certain constant characteristics that are astonishing if one reflects that this people has never established permanent political institutions of its own on a larger scale than that of the village commonwealth, and that there is no Berber literature, no Berber book, that there has never been a Berber author, a standard Berber language and that the Berbers have evolved no architecture nor developed any art worthy of the name.

The main characteristic of the Berber is a surprising ethnical vitality and not the preservation and development of any ethnical individuality. The Berbers have

resisted all attempts to civilize them (perhaps the attempts have not been very serious) and as an acute French observer (M. Boissier) has said, this population possesses "un mélange de qualités contraires qu'aucune n'a réunies au même degré: elle paraissait se livrer et ne se donnait pas entièrement: elle s'accommodait de la façon de vivre des autres et, au fond, gardait la sienne: en un mot elle était peu résistante et très persistante."

That is the Berber in a phrase: he does not resist but he persists.

The Berber, whether town-dweller, nomad or mountaineer, whether peasant, superficially "Arabized" or faithful to his traditional way of life, is still as Sallust depicted him in oft-quoted phrases, *velox, patiens laborum* and *plerosque secectus dissolvit*. The harshness of the living in an arid land (on a handful of *kuskus*—hard wheat semolina—he can keep going all day) kills off the weaklings, and the violent sun disinfects. The typical Berber's physical endurance is astounding, and his recuperative powers almost unequalled. He is as tough as his little Barb or his diminutive donkey that jogs along with incredibly heavy loads on its back.

If Barbary has never been, in historical times at least, the seat of an independent Berber realm, the Berber is a man of war, and the purer the Berber strain so much the better soldier does the man of Barbary make. The best colonial troops the French had were their Moroccan levies. The fierce mountaineers of the Rif not only helped Franco to conquer Spain, but they help to keep him where he is.

The better you get to know the Berbers, whether "Arabized" or "pure", the better you get on with them. I think that of all the *Maghrebis* I like the Algerian best; it may be that over one hundred years of French influence have done more towards civilizing him than all the domination of Carthaginian, Roman, Vandal, and

Arab. In Morocco the Algerian shows up as a man of culture and enlightenment. In Tunisia he is seen as a man of character and valour. In Morocco you are repelled, at first (in the case of all except the most highly placed), by a brusqueness and a social manner that is Spanish in its off-handedness and self-sufficiency. The Berber, again, especially in Morocco where he is seen at his purest, is (like his cousin the Spaniard) no intellectual. The Sallustian "*velox*" does not refer to wits but to bodily activity. When the Berber (as so often in Algeria) has been able to rid himself of the complacency, ignorance and obscurantism that are the price of his age-long isolation and its resultant provincialism, he is often a delightful human being.

The Berbers are all professing Moslems, although the orthodoxy of some of the groups is suspect to the rigorists. Your North African is apt to prefer his own code of custom to the obligations of Koranic law. In fact, the peculiar tinge that *Maghrebi* Islam exhibits even among the most orthodox and "Arabized" (cult of Marabuts or wonder-working saints, sacred wells and so forth) shows that the persistent Berber influence is rooted in very far-off ancient things.

The North African Moslems, however, yield to none in their fanaticism and piety. *Maghrebi* Islam has a distinctly puritan aspect. As Christians (and Barbary is a Christian Lost Dominion) the North Africans were always asserting their individualism and independence as against the increasingly centralizing tendency and the growing sacerdotalism of the Church. In their fearlessness, their dogmatism and their almost Protestant insistence upon the value of the individual judgement, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Arius, and the great Donatus himself, were as typically Berber as the most narrowly orthodox doctor of the Law at Fez or Tunis to-day.

In formal religion, therefore, the Maghreb is but an

echo of the East. From the fall of Granada in 1492 nothing reached Barbary from the West until the French occupied Algeria one hundred and ten years ago. Even the religious sects of North Africa (with, it is true, such peculiar Berber features as the religious confraternities) are but local variations of those founded in the East.

The tribes, the dynasties and the families of the Maghreb boast false pedigrees to bolster up their claims to Eastern origin. To-day the light of new Moslem modernism shines from Egypt, and that country enjoys a prodigious prestige in Barbary.

Of the population of Barbary probably less than two million are of European origin, even if we include the large French and Spanish garrisons. The population of all North Africa<sup>1</sup> from Egypt to Morocco (with the exception of Libya) has greatly increased in recent years. When the French occupied Algeria in 1830, there were not more than two million Algerians living in the new dominion. To-day their numbers exceed six million. Even during the thirty years of French occupation in Morocco (the greater part of which time was passed in repression and pacification) the population has grown, and a drift towards the towns has set in, with the inevitable result that a miserable urban proletariat is being rapidly formed.

Each of the three countries of Barbary (Libya is geo-

<sup>1</sup> North Africa contains nearly two-thirds of the speakers of the Arabic language (and therefore, in common estimation, of the "Arabs"); the approximate figures are:

<i>Africa</i>		<i>Asia</i>	
Libya	1,000,000	Iraq	3,500,000
Tunisia	2,500,000	Syria	3,500,000
Algeria	6,250,000	Palestine	1,500,000
Morocco	7,000,000	Arabia	5,000,000
Egypt	17,000,000	Yemen	3,500,000
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	33,750,000		17,000,000
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graphically a thing apart) has its distinct national physiognomy even if each merges into the other without any clear natural boundary. Although religion, dominant language, and to a certain extent customs, are the same throughout, there is a very considerable difference between the peoples of the three lands. The hackneyed saying that Tunisia is a woman, Algeria a man, and Morocco a lion, has much truth in it.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIBYA

FROM the Egyptian frontier to the Tunisian border runs an excellent tarmac road along the whole Libyan coast. Except for that part of it which traverses the uplands of Cyrenaica (that fall precipitously to the sea) the highway is never more than a few miles from the Mediterranean. In Cyrenaica itself there are subsidiary roads between Benghazi and Derna.

The area that composed the Italian colony of Libya is enormous and it is nearly all desert. Along the Mediterranean coast there is a string of oases (often divided from each other by long stretches of wilderness) where from time to time rain falls. Inland, the desert presents a variety of forms. Sometimes it is a rocky plateau and sometimes a vast pebbly plain broken here and there by dingy hills eroded into queer shapes or sawn off flat by the sand-blasts. Sometimes the ground breaks down to depressions of shifting sand dunes. Where erosion has scooped out deep troughs sometimes there is seepage of water and an oasis or two. These oases have been the milestones of caravan routes for at least two thousand years—Siwa, Jarabub, Jalo, Au-

gheila, Marada, and Hon. . . . Farther south the wilderness is waterless for hundreds of miles until you reach the oases of Kufra. Still farther south come the highlands of Ennedi, Erdi, and Tebesti, that cut off the Libyan desert from the French territories that gradually merge into the grassy plains and marshes of Lake Chad. Along the frontier of Egypt is the almost impenetrable barrier of the Great Sand Sea some six hundred miles long and one hundred and fifty miles wide.

From Alexandria to Cyrenaica the coast is flat and protected by a reef of limestone (all this coast has sunk in recent times). Then comes the plateau of Cyrenaica that, after Derna, cuts backwards into the desert and leaves, between the rocky uplands and the sea, the hills known as the *Jebel Akhdar* that is a region of flowing water and cultivation; the only fertile patch of rain-watered soil between the Lebanon and Tunisia.

All along the dreary wastes from Benghazi westwards around the curving coast of the ancient Gulf of Syrtis the roads winds; El-Agheila and then two hundred miles farther on Sirte (whence a desert track leads south to the oasis of Giofra—the westernmost of the “Twenty-Ninth Parallel” oases), then Bucrat-el-Hsum at the south-eastern end of the great *sebkha* (salt lagoon) of Tauorga. These hamlets have been, in recent years, transformed by the Italians into army posts and even the pestilential swampy region of Tauorga (that from of old has had a detestable reputation) has been to some extent cleaned up. At the farther end of the Tauorga lagoon is Misurata (from which Count Volpi, the Italian financier and former governor of Libya, took his title), and you are in the first of the fertile sea-shore oases of Tripolitania, Homs (Leptis Magna, the old Roman capital), that has been for ages the depot for the produce of Fezzan. Desiccation has been going on apace, but the Italians have cleaned up the place admirably. The ruins—Triumphal Arch of Septimius

Severus, the Baths, the Imperial Palace, the Basilica, the Circus, and the ancient barrage works—stand out amid new streets and new white buildings.

The building, town-planning, and sanitary activities of the Italians have been remarkable. Whatever else may be said of their rule, the spick-and-span and even imposing appearance of every place they have taken over, from Rhodes to Benghazi, must be admitted. The town of Tripoli has been transformed from a dusty, ramshackle Turkish village, into a modern city. The antiquities have been excellently preserved and exposed, and even if the capital of Tripolitania is a little uneasily swept and garnished, photographs of it taken as late as 1911 are unrecognizable.

In 1938 I penetrated far into the desert of Tripolitania south-westwards to Ghadamès on the Tunisian frontier, and even some way to the isolated post of Ghat. It was the time of the "King-Emperor's" visit to Balbo, and the festivities wound up with a review of the troops at Bir-el-Ghnm.

You drive out of Tripoli on a fine new highway. For miles the road is fringed with trees, and as far as Aziziyah (named after the Red Sultan, so recently was all this land Turkish) irrigation, colonization, and hard work have wrought marvels. Everywhere you see plantations forced out of the sandy, wretched soil. There glide past allotments, wind-driven pumping stations, and cultivated fields. It is all a triumph over adverse conditions, but you soon slip from earth to sand. Even at eight o'clock on a May morning the heat is terrific (the highest shade temperature ever recorded was registered at Tripoli); in the distance are rows of weather-worn tawny cliffs—the edge of the stony wilderness. All about you is the immense luminosity of the desert and a mirage of sea and islands shimmers far to the right. The climate of these wastes is harsh, and the farther you drive south the more violent become



the changes of temperature. Sometimes for three or four days on end you get the flaming wind from the south followed by chilly nights.

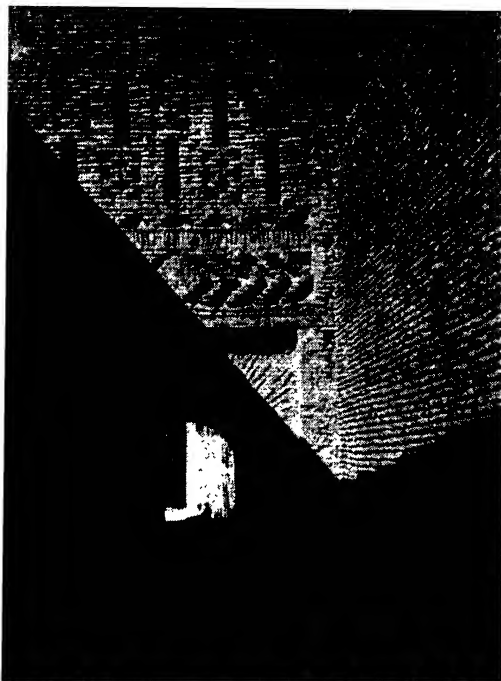
Not five hundred yards from the road, lined with wasp-coloured bombers, passes a caravan of perhaps a thousand camels laden with the produce of the south or carrying the little globular murrey tents that shelter the women and children. You are in the Sahara.

At Bir-el-Ghnem there was a grandstand for the review, and no other sign of habitation but a faint white smudge at the foot of the cliffs. The 35,000 men who marched, drove, galloped, or jerked past in tanks and trucks made but a small streak in the vastness of the waste.

If you go south to Mizda or westwards towards Nalut, you will never see more vegetation than a few shrubs on the heights—the rest is desert and thirst.

During the royal visit the whole town of Tripoli had been whitewashed (yes, every hut, hovel, house, hotel, and habitation), so that the glare almost blinded one. The natives are browbeaten as nowhere else in North Africa, for the French manage to obtain from their North Africans a happy mean of comportment that is as far from the embarrassing obsequiousness of the Libyan as it is from the insolent brusqueness of the Moroccans in the Spanish zone or in Tangier, blighted by an "international" administration. The boot-blacks of Tripoli make the Fascist salute and bellow at you "*Evviva il Rè-Imperatore, evviva Mussolini, evviva l'Italia*" before they grab hold of your feet. At gun-fire every man, woman and child (at least in public) has to stand to attention and make the Fascist salute. The sentries and guards who swarm everywhere (and especially in and near the pompously refurbished *Castello* which houses the administrative offices) snap and quiver to attention directly they see a European.

The native population of Libya has declined by per-



### III. TOZEUR

1. BRICK FACADE  
IN RELIEF  
*(Paul Popper)*
2. A SAINT'S TOMB  
*(Paul Popper)*



happas as much as one half since to Turkish neglect succeeded Italian brutality. Although many refugees have returned in recent years from Tunisia and Egypt, there were still, it was estimated, 70,000 Libyans on Tunisian territory in 1939 and many in the western oases of Egyptian territory. The repression of Graziani will long live in the memory of the men of the Maghreb. Sealed-up wells, Senussi<sup>1</sup> sheikhs trussed up like turkeys and then thrown down from aeroplanes on their villages. . . . The Italians themselves admit a decrease of 90 per cent in the livestock of the country during the years 1926-33. Compared with these horrors, any measures of "pacification" that the French may have undertaken in Algeria in the past and even in Morocco in our own times are unworthy of being recorded.

While Turkey was engaged in the Balkan wars of 1911-12, Italy occupied the coastal regions of Libya ostensibly for strategic reasons and as compensation for the presence of Britain in Egypt and of France in Tunisia. The first attack on Tripolitania was marked by wholesale massacres of the peasant cultivators in the coastal regions. On German promptings, the Libyan population rose, under the leadership of the Senussi rulers, and drove the Italian garrisons back to one or two points on the shore. The Tripoli region was solidly occupied again by 1925, but the populations of the desert still held out until Graziani took over command.

After the break-up of the North African territories of the Baghdad and Cairo Caliphs, Tripoli was, for years, the capital of a corsair state. The Spaniards held the place from 1510 to 1520 and then built the Castle that

<sup>1</sup> The Senussi, a powerful and fanatical Moslem sect, are made up of several sub-tribes. They had their headquarters in Benghazi until forced by the Turks in the '70's of the last century to retire to the oasis of Jarabub. The "Great Mukhtar" or Senussi leader was murdered in the late '20's by the Italians. His successor, Sayyid Idris el-Senussi, has collaborated with us in the present conflict.

is the most striking monument of the town. For some years, the Knights of St. John (later "of Malta") occupied the city, but the Turks evicted them. In 1711, with the waning of the Turkish power, the native Tripolitanian Caramanli family made themselves practically independent sovereigns (the Italians have often toyed with the idea of setting up one of the present-day Caramanlis as puppet monarch) but in 1835 the Turks reasserted their authority and ruled Tripolitania (and such of the rest of Libya as was not under the control of the Senussi) until the Italian invasion of 1911.

From Ras Agedir, on the Tunisian border, to the Egyptian frontier and far south for a thousand miles and more, this desert of Libyan sand and barren rocks has an area of about 1,760,000 square miles. The population in 1938 was only 888,401. Not unnaturally, the Italians had the place to themselves as far as other Europeans were concerned, even the ubiquitous Germans were far to seek. The only ones I ever saw were the German officers in Benghazi who sat so stiffly by themselves in the hotel, bowed so formally to their Italian allies and seemed so prodigiously bored by the whole country and its masters.

When I took the Italian road westwards towards the Tunisian frontier (there are no railways anywhere in Libya) in 1938, it was fringed for most of its length (and lined in the villages) with a sort of Potemkin-procession of scrubbed and bedizened natives, camels with garish trappings; masses of carpets, bunting, banners with "patriotic" inscriptions . . . the loyal subjects of the "King-Emperor" to greet him as he drove by.

This coast road is, for much of its length, pleasantly green; there are fairly prosperous-looking villages and small towns, such as Sabratha and Zuara among the sand-dunes with over 10,000 inhabitants mostly (like

the men of Djerba in Tunisia) of the 'Abadite heresy.

After Zuara the scenery changes and you are in the desert, for in western Libya and southern Tunisia the sand-sea of the eastern *erg* comes almost to the Mediterranean shore.

The Italian frontier block-house is called Bou Chemmesc (Abu Khemmesh), and once over the border, on the French side, the road becomes rapidly worse and in patches definitely bad—the French did not want too good a highway for the benefit of prospective invaders from the east.

I have been held up for over two hours by a sand-storm on the highroad of the Tunisian South, but even after three years of drought the half-starved Bedawin had not the hang-dog look of the Libyans blessed with Neo-Roman civilization. These desert-dwellers seem much the same anywhere from the Persian frontier to the borders of Senegal . . . the blue-robed women with unveiled, broad and often semi-Mongoloid faces, their clothes all pinned up with great silver brooches; the low, black, camel's-hair tents, the free, friendly, fierce look on the faces of the men of the wilderness.

Ben-Gardane, the first Tunisian village, is a God-forsaken hole of flies and filth that was a permanent garrison of the Foreign Legion who were used to mount guard on the "Mareth Line" of fortifications a little farther north. At first, you are inclined to be critical of French sloppiness, nonchalance and dirt, and to compare things with the apparent if flimsy orderliness of the Italian area. Later you come to realize that things are not as they seem.

## CHAPTER VII

### TUNISIA

FROM Ben Gardane the road drives north-east to Gabès, a real oasis in the sands although on the sea-shore and the terminus southwards of the Tunisian railways. Over the low sand-dunes you can see shimmering the shallow blue waters of the Gulf of Gabès.

All this coastal region is beset with *sebkhas* (salt lagoons).

Beyond Ben Gardane to the west in the hill-country of the Ksour lies Matmata. The desert area of the Ksour is inhabited by Berber tribes who only recently have become completely Arabic-speaking. Many of them are troglodytes and live either in caves hollowed out of the sides of great pits dug in the soft reddish soil or in *ghorfas* that are habitations piled one upon another and abutting on the cliff-faces.

From Gabès you can go by Zarzis and its olive plantations, skirting the lagoons to the narrow arm of sea that divides the mainland from the Island of Djerba which was the last refuge of the Berber language in Tunisia. The speech has now died out as completely as Cornish in Cornwall, but the men of Djerba still profess the 'Abadite heresy and are looked upon askance by the orthodox. The island is flat but covered with palms and fruit trees. The soil is fertile, and tradition identifies sites on the island with Homeric legends. It does not seem clear which, for you are told that Djerba was the abode of the Lotus Eaters, that it was Circe's Isle, and that on it may be found Calypso's cavern. There is a large colony of Jews who have been on the island from time immemorial. One of the ancient synagogues is a place of pilgrimage for the Jews of southern Tunisia and western Libya. Those who were

Italian subjects used to flock there before the present war not only from motives of piety but also in order to smuggle out their gold in the shape of women's ornaments, returning home with silver-gilt imitations.

From Gabès and its 200,000 palm trees (too near the sea to yield good dates) you can get by rail westwards along the depression of the great *Chotts* or salt marshes, but in order to reach the fascinating oases of Tozeur and Nefta that lie on the north-western shore of the Chott-el-Djerid you must go up the coast railway as far as Sfax and then double back, using the single-track line built by the phosphate companies. You are not long on your journey before you realize that you are in a land of thirst—the sleepers are made of steel. The scenery gets more and more Saharan—a level of sandy soil, set with hummocks and tufts of bitter, sharp grass and overhanging the scene a haze of sand—until you reach Gafsa, a dirty, ramshackle place built on the rising barren ground that slopes northwards into the rich phosphate mountains.

From Gafsa to Tozeur you run along the trough to the north of the *Chotts*, and but a few miles from them you can see nothing but sand. Tozeur is a town of palm-groves of endless beauty and of gurgling rills of water. The houses are of sun-dried brick, and many of them have courses set with patterns in relief for all the world like those of the old palace in Turin. Tozeur is the ancient Thursuros, and what the Arabs call the *Bled el Djerid* consists of the four oases of Tozeur, Nefta, El Oudiane, and El Hamma, with altogether about a million palm trees, the best of whose dates known as *Degla* are unsurpassed in North Africa.

The Chott-el-Djerid just to the south of the line of oases glimmers and gleams in the sunlight like a great glacier. Its surface is crisp and crystalline but as treacherous as quicksand.

Nefta lies against an escarpment whence issue springs

of water that trickle down into the sands and fertilize the soil. Beyond Nefta, westwards, is nothing but waste. If you are adventurous, you may try to follow the sand-drifted track south of the mountains to Touggourt in southern Algeria.

Northwards from Gafsa, railway and roads lead among the western hills (that form the frontier with Algeria) to the ruins of Sbeitla (the ancient capital of the Byzantine exarchs) near the battlefield on which was decided the fate of Christian Africa. Farther on is Kasserine with its Roman theatre and then come the grass-grown monuments of Thelepta. Just over the frontier into Algeria is the Roman town of Tebessa. After thirteen hundred years of demolitions and pillaging at every turn there is something to remind you of Roman Africa.

Sfax by the sea is surrounded by millions of olive trees which make up the greatest single olive plantation in the world, and the trees yield a particularly rich, fruity oil that has ever been one of the greatest riches of *Ifriqiya*. Off the coast are the Kerkennah islands that we saw when flying in to Tunisia from the east. They were used as a penal settlement under the Romans, and in later times as a place of relegation for cast-off members of the Beylical harems. The physical type of the Kerkennans is therefore most strangely mixed, and you can generally distinguish them from other Tunisians. The islanders have a high reputation for honesty and diligence. In Tunisia, when you can, you have Kerkennah servants and Moroccan night-watchmen. The continental Tunisian is, as a rule, more subtle than reliable.

From Sfax you can cut across the plain—bordered in the west by the distant hills—to Kairouan, still the most “oriental” town in Barbary. Okba ben Nafi, the conqueror of Tunisia, founded the city in 671, and his name clings to the great mosque whose vast courtyard



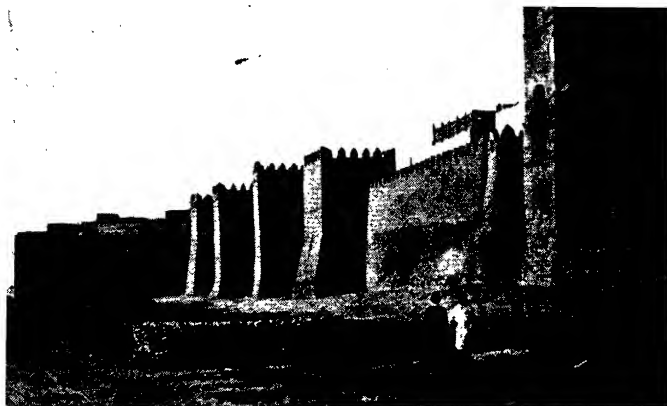
and massive Saharan minaret make it one of the most impressive religious edifices in all the lands of Islam. Kairouan, dazzling white against the dun plain and the seared hills, fades out on all sides into cemeteries, *kubbas* (domed tombs), *marabuts* (shrines of holy men), and rubbish heaps. Within the walls the arrogance and guile of the inhabitants betray the typical holy city, but, in the case of Kairouan, one whose religious glory has departed. But you want to go back again and again to such things as the "Barber's Mosque"<sup>1</sup>—the oratory is lined with the most sumptuously faded and blended tiles that stretch in all directions like fine woven stuffs.

On your way back to the coast you pass by El-Djem that we saw from the air. It is the least ruined of all the great amphitheatres, and after the Colosseum and the arena of Puzzoli the largest that has been left to us.

Between Sfax and Sousse over the *sahel* or strand, you cut across the base of Mehdiya point that Froissart called "Cape Africa". . . . When the rains fall, the *sahel* is fabulously fertile. The greatest eulogy of flattery that the *Maghrebi* can address to a personage of importance is to say "he rides with green spurs", that is, after his passage the rains make the sprouts to jut forth. In the lands of sand you can easily realize why green is the sacred colour of Islam. You know that things are going well in Tunisia when you see the great, luscious jade-green broad-beans carried around on men's heads and heaped up on circular wicker trays. . . . The age-old sacred beans of Egypt.

Sousse, another port, like Sfax, for export of oil and phosphates, is the Hadrumentum of Cæsar's time. Outside its massive battened walls and on rising ground to the west there run into the earth hundreds of subter-

<sup>1</sup> It has really nothing to do with a barber, for it is a *zaouia* (oratory) built round the tomb of a *sahab* or Companion of the Prophet who always carried about with him a lock of Mohammed's hair.



#### IV. SFAX

1. THE RAMPARTS (*E.N.A.*)
2. MODERN BUILDINGS (*Paul Popper*)

anean galleries. These catacombs are mostly of the second and third centuries . . . there is a jumble of pagan and Christian, Greek, and Roman. Before a slate slab incised THEODORA in Greek lettering, the guide once said to me: "It is not *certain* that this is the burial-place of Justinian's empress."

As you go northwards, the landscape becomes more and more green. You leave the sea. Far to your right stretch along the coast delicious hamlets and towns—Hammamet in its orange and lemon groves, Nabeul with its painted-tile factories and one of the numerous centres for the fostering of native arts and crafts that the French have set up all through the land. This shore is protected by the long peninsula that ends in Cape Bon pointing towards Sicily only ninety miles away.

You cut through a rift in the hills and you are on the broad sweep of the Bay of Tunis. To the east is the curving coast of the Cape Bon peninsula, dotted with villages and hot springs—Hammam Lif, Korbus, and so forth. Before you is white Tunis sloping back from its stagnant lake. A spit of sand divides the *Bahira* from the sea. The spit is set with seaside hamlets and bathing beaches right up to the headland of Carthage on whose seaward side the white and blue houses of Sidi-bou-Said tumble down to the sea.

On the hill of Carthage itself you can, from a distance, see little but the great, gaunt, new "Moresque-Gothic" Basilica that is the cathedral of the Archbishop of Carthage, Primate of Africa. . . .

Tunis has more than 200,000 inhabitants, of whom more than half are Moslems living in the well-preserved, well-built, clean and attractive *medina* or native city. The main mosque, significantly known as the Djamâa-cz-Zeitouna or Olive-Tree Mosque,<sup>1</sup> was founded in 732. It ranks as a university that plays for eastern

<sup>1</sup> Legend has it that the Mosque is built on the site of a shrine dedicated to Saint Oliva of Palermo. .

Maghreb the same role as the Great Mosque of Fez for Morocco, or even, in a more modest way, that of the Azhar Mosque in Cairo. It is a centre of Tunisian nationalism and of the movement known as the "Old Destour".

In the bazaars, which are perhaps the most varied in Barbary, you may meet plenty of subtle and well-informed men, so different in their suavity from the brusque, provincial Moroccans.

Tunisia has been ruled by quasi-independent Beys since 1612 when the Corsican Murad made himself practically independent of Stambul and founded a dynasty that lasted until 1705, when Hussein ben 'Ali (perhaps a Cretan) proclaimed himself hereditary ruler of the "Regency", as the realm of Tunisia is officially called. As early as 1228 the Hafsid dynasty had declared themselves independent in *Ifriqiya*.

Before the Turkish tide of conquest swept along the African coast, the Portuguese and Spaniards had already endeavoured to carry across the Mediterranean their crusade against the Moor. It was the Portuguese (who had definitely ridded their land of the African invaders nearly three hundred and fifty years before the unity of Spain was consummated) who first set about the conquest of strategic points on the African coast as part of their vast plan for a commercial empire overseas. They captured Ceuta (opposite Gibraltar) in 1415. Arzila on the Atlantic coast of Morocco and Tangier on the African side of the Strait of Gibraltar followed a few years later. The Portuguese had, however, more distant and more profitable programmes than the reduction of Barbary. It fell to the Spaniards soon after the Moors had been expelled from Granada in 1492 to attempt the conquest of the Maghreb.

The attempts were not very successful. During the reign of the Catholic Kings, Diégo de Córdoba sacked Mers-el-Kebir near Oran (now the French

naval base). In 1509 Cardinal Ximenes was at Oran itself (that is once again the most Spanish town of Algeria)—Bougie, Dellys, and Mostaganem on the Algerian sea-board were gradually occupied, and even Tlemçen, well inland, was for some years a Spanish outpost, but in 1510 the "Barbarossa" brothers, Baba-Aruj and Kheir-ed-Din, as corsairs in the service of the Turkish sultan, set about the expulsion of the Spaniards.

Mulay Hassan, the last sovereign of the Hafsid dynasty in Tunisia, was driven out by the privateers, and he applied to the King of Spain, the Emperor Charles V, for help. The Emperor set out with a great armada from Cagliari in Sardinia for Carthage on 16th July 1535, and Andrea Doria reseatd Mulay Hassan on his shaky throne. But he was only there with the aid of Spanish arms, and soon the Hafsid sovereignty collapsed, Tunisia became a regular Turkish province until the local Turkish representative or Bey proclaimed his autonomy, but with a theoretical subservience to the Sublime Porte.

During the 300 years following, Tunisia was profoundly influenced from the Levant in architecture, cooking, costume and religious rite, for the prevailing sect is the Hanefite and not the usual North African Malekite.

The sovereignty of Tunisia is now vested in an hereditary "*Beylik*", succession to which is by regular Koranic law, i.e. to the eldest surviving member of the family. The ruling sovereign is known as "His Highness the Bey, Possessor of the Kingdom of Tunis".

The administration of the country is conducted through nineteen "civil controls" at the head of each of which is a French *contrôleur civil*, who is, to all intents and purposes, the provincial governor. Each "control" is also furnished with a native Tunisian *kaid* (who, although theoretically the "governor", has little real

power<sup>1</sup>)—under him are *kahias* (sort of “mayors”) and *sheikhs* (rural headmen). There is no measure of even local self-government. Native Tunisians are, for the most part, excluded from the public services except from the above-mentioned posts and from the judiciary and from honorary functions connected with the Beylical Court and the Beylical “army” which contains almost more generals than privates. There exists, it is true, an organism known as the *Grand Conseil*, composed of French and other European members who are elected by a very restricted franchise and of Tunisian members who are not elected at all but nominated by the French Resident-General. The functions of the Grand Council are purely advisory and moreover strictly limited to financial and economic matters.

At the head of the administration is the French Resident-General who is, in all but name, the Governor-General of the country. He is (or was until the fall of France) appointed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under whose control the country is placed, since Tunisia is a protectorate and not a colonial possession or an integral part of France, as is Algeria). The nominations are often purely political ones. As a matter of fact, in the recent past at least, the political nominees have shown a good deal better record than the civil service appointees. M. Peyrouton was one of the best, if also one of the most rigorous, of recent Residents-General. The promoted prefect who held the reins of power during the revolutionary outburst of 1938 was a disaster. Since the collapse of France the position has been occupied by Admiral Estéva, a French sailor noted for his bluntness of expression as well as for his

<sup>1</sup> As such, although the Kaid of Sfax, for instance, in whose family the office of governor has been practically hereditary for several generations, exercises an influence on the French authorities, on the Beylical Court and on the local population far greater than would be justified by his official position alone.

honesty of purpose, but his task is a hopelessly difficult one in face of German and Italian pressure.

As a part of the colonial expansion programme undertaken by the Third Republic after the defeat of 1871, with the connivance if not with the active encouragement of Bismarck, the French took advantage of the increasing financial and administrative disorder of the Regency and of frontier clashes between Tunisian armed bands and Algerians on the Algero-Tunisian frontier to occupy Tunis (in spite of Italian protestations), and to impose their terms upon the reigning Bey. The French invasion took place in 1881, and on 12th May of that year the signing of the Kassar-Said treaty put an end to hostilities. The conditions of the French protectorate were stipulated by the convention of 1883.

The contiguity of Tunisia to Italy has made the Regency for many generations a land of immigration for poverty-stricken Italian peasants both from the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and from other parts of the country, as well as a profitable field of activity for Jews from Leghorn and elsewhere. It is probable that to-day, of the well-to-do residents of Italian origin in Tunis city, more than a third are either Jews or of Jewish origin. The mass of the Italians in Tunisia,<sup>1</sup> who number about 100,000, are poor labourers, petty tradesmen and urban workmen. As everywhere in North Africa, they are regarded by the Moslem population with feelings akin to contempt as being the only Europeans (save, perhaps, the Spaniards) who live as miserable lives as themselves and perform as menial tasks.

<sup>1</sup> By special proviso of international agreements between the French and Italian governments, the Italians in Tunisia retain their Italian nationality from generation to generation, though by a supplementary agreement between Mussolini and Laval—that has, of course, no binding power now—there was to be a gradual absorption of the Italians into French nationality.



## V. CULTIVATION: RELAXATION

1. THE OLIVE FOREST NEAR SFAX (*E.N.A.*)
2. A FETE AT AIN-SEFROU (*Wide World*)



With the exception of the Jewish elements the Italians of Tunisia (whatever their private convictions or prejudices may be) form a homogeneous *bloc* well under the control of the local Italian consular officials. The French of Tunisia, on the other hand, although they outnumber the Italians by some 15,000, are a mixed bag, some French of France, some French of North Africa (a very different thing), many Jews, naturalized Algerians, Maltese and others.<sup>1</sup>

The Italians have never given up their claims in Tunisia (it will be remembered that the cry was "Corsica, Tunisia, Malta!") and Italian pretensions have been pushed with characteristic impudence since the beginning of the Mussolini régime. The weakness of the French governments of just before this war and the successful bluff of the Italians after Abyssinia added to all the difficulties in Tunisia, and the various anti-French parties found spiritual and material succour at the Italian Consulate's pompous stucco and rep palace in the *rue Es-Sadikia*.

Some of the Italian peasantry are, however, fairly prosperous small landowners and vintners, but they do not count much in the list of Tunisian landed proprietors. The amount of rural property held by rich Tunisian Moslems is considerable. There are French land companies possessed of large concessions or estates. The Reigning House has considerable domains and the present Bey is a singularly careful and economical monarch. The *Habus* or Moslem Pious Foundations (whose property is sacrosanct to the extent of leaving *Habus* olive trees growing in the middle of roads) cover at least 200,000 square kilometres. As elsewhere in Barbary, the increase in population has been accompanied by the placing of no corresponding amount of

<sup>1</sup> In 1936 the population of the Regency was 2,608,313, of whom 2,335,623 were Moslems. The urban population outside Tunis city does not exceed 180,000.

land at the disposal of the natives—although the urban proletariat in Tunisia is not as miserable as that of Algeria or of that being formed in Morocco, both because of the relatively more fertile soil and of the smaller population that does not, for a variety of reasons, increase so rapidly as that of either Morocco or Algeria. The population of Tunisia is, in fact, concentrated in the hilly, fairly well watered north and along the eastern littoral. Of the 48,300 square miles of Tunisian territory, one half is pure desert. The remainder falls into three natural regions: the mountainous oak-forested zone north of the Medjerda river, the *tell* of hills and high plateaux between the Medjerda and a line passing through Hammamet on the eastern coast, and the *sahel* of wide plains fertile after rain and desert in bad years.

Tunisia is thus the natural prolongation of Algeria. The proportion of hill to plain is much less, it is still less wooded and the rainfall is less, but the northern part of Tunisia gives in all but very bad years an impression of graciousness and plenty that very few places in Algeria present.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ALGERIA

YOU can travel by train from Tunis to Marrakesh in southern Morocco, one thousand two hundred miles through the length of Barbary, and although everyone who can avoids (or avoided before the petrol famine) trains, and takes to the road in bus or car, it saves a good deal of time, if you want to see the whole land, to travel from east to west by railway and to make your excursions laterally from it, by car.

After Tunis you drive across country to Bizerta, one of the best (if not the best) harbours in the Mediterranean. The land is rolling downs and the hills are patchily wooded. Soon the hills turn into mountains that fall into the Mediterranean. You reach the Algerian frontier at Souk Ahras (the birth-place of St. Augustine) if you are headed for the curious town of Constantine perched on its high rock, and southwards of Constantine are the finest Roman ruins, Tebessa with Caracalla's Triumphal Arch, Lambèse, the old Roman garrison town at the foothills of the Aurès mountains, there placed to hold the wild Berber tribes in order. Trajan's Timgad is not far off. . . .

If you follow the coast line, you leave Tunisia at Tabarca by the sea, where there is a lovely view of crags and pines and islets framed by the columns of a Roman temple. Offshore is Gallite island, whence come the best langoustes and lobsters of North Africa.

Bône is the classical Hippo of St. Augustine . . . the orange port of Philippeville, Djidjelli and Bougie follow each other as you approach the great mountain mass of Djurdjura, the fastness of the Berber-speaking tribes. The line skirts the Djurdjura to the south, curves round it and strikes seawards again on the fertile high plain of the Mitidja where lies Algiers city.

This is the region where the two main chains of Barbary mountains merge into one. Between the two ranges are the High Plateaux whose terraces increase in height as they recede from the *tell* (in Algeria, as in Tunisia, the "strand", i.e. the plains near the sea; but in Algeria instead of being but a little above sea-level they are at the top of high cliffs). The alluvial plains all over Barbary are confined either to the immediate environs of the high hills or the neighbourhood of the coast. In Algeria the *tell* extends from the mostly rocky sea-cliffs (there are some places where the cliffs slope down to small sandy beaches) to about a maximum of

fifty miles inland. Then come the High Plateaux that slope to the Sahara except where the mountain mass, as in the case of the Aurès, shows a sheer face towards the desert. The High Plateaux are a region of extremes of temperature and remind you of the old adage that North Africa is a cold country with a hot sun. The Plateaux and their bordering hills are bare save for a sparse growth of stunted trees on the southern slopes. The uplands are, however, fair pasture, and cereals can there be successfully grown in good rain years—about one in five. The greatest height of the Plateaux is about 3,300 feet.

The Atlas Complex drives southwards spurs which cut into the region of the salt marshes (or *Chotts*) that witness to the great changes of climate that Barbary has undergone since man first began to range over grassy plains that are now waterless wildernesses.

There is nothing quite like the oases of the Algerian South. They are unique in North Africa. The air and the light are wonderfully pure. The trip from Algiers city to Bou Sa'ada (the most northerly of the oases) makes you vividly aware of the narrowness of Barbary. You can do the road in seven hours by motor-bus. You wind out of Algiers at midday. The great city gleams under a bright pale sky. To your left lies the spacious harbour. On your right the town stretches up its hills and around its amphitheatre of mountains. You run through a series of fields and groves that look for all the world like the outskirts of Toulon as you take the Hyères highway. Then you gradually rise on a twisting route through valleys, gorges, glens and over downs to the barren wind-swept uplands. At Aumale (for long the advance post of the French towards the mysterious South) you are on the crest of the ridge. Thenceforth you slope downwards, at first along roads bordered with poplars and planes and soon into a dryer region. You meet your first camel. The earth merges

into sand. The sunburned rocks look as African as those of south-eastern Spain. As evening falls you can see the glimmer of camp-fires. Jackals slink across the path. The bubbling grunts of the tethered camels reverberate against the rocks.

The sun has long set when you reach Bou-Sa'ada, but the night is all mauve. The air is heavy with the spermiatic odour of the false pepper-trees. Thousands of grey shapes are around you, and the shuffle of their babouches on the grit is like the lapping of waves. . . .

You could have done the whole thing by private car in four or five hours, and you are already in the Sahara. It is true that far to your right and left the plateaux and hills cut much farther into the desert, but southwards from Bou-Sa'ada to Laghouat, to Ghardaia, to El-Goléa, to Adrar and through the Tanezrouft of thirst you will see nothing but desert for two thousand miles until you reach the first grasslands that lead to the Niger basin.

Tunisia and Algeria, although they present in their customs, and from their history, differences that are not inconsiderable, may be said to make up Eastern Barbary, for Morocco is so much a thing apart that it falls into a class by itself that we may call Western Barbary. The population of Eastern Barbary can be sorted out into four main classes.

First there are the mountain Berbers (such as the Kabyles of the Djurdjura mountains to the east of Algiers and the Shawia of the Aurès): they are, for the most part, terrace agriculturalists, and they all profess to be orthodox Moslems of the Malekite rite (the most widely spread of the four "orthodox" sects recognized in North Africa). Then come the Berber-speaking oasis peoples of Ghardaia, Tidikelt, the M'zab, and so forth. They form a special group from the cultural and social points of view, and they belong to a schismatic (but not heretical) sect known as the Khawarij. The Arabic-

speaking tribesmen of the drier plains and High Plateaux are nearly all pastoral nomads or transhumants. Last of all there is the very mixed urban population, the exact make-up of which differs in each locality. The mass of the Andalusian refugees, for instance, attracted by the settled conditions of the land, poured into Tunisia after the expulsion of the Moriscos by Philip II in 1609. The town-dwellers are all Arabic-speaking. On to the mass of Arabized Berbers have been superimposed converted Jews, negro and European slaves and their descendants, Turks and all sorts of wanderers who have been received unquestioningly into the community of the Faithful.

The main difference between Algeria and Tunisia lies in the fact that the former has never made up a definite national unit, although on and off during the Middle Ages Tlemçen in western Algeria was the capital of a realm whose frontiers varied according to the fortunes of the ruling adventurers. Between independent Morocco in the west and autonomous Tunisia in the east lay the narrow corridor of Algeria, the passage between the broad fertile lands of Morocco's Atlantic Plain and the rich olive-groves of *Ifriqiya*. Algeria was for centuries a collection of quasi-independent petty states (some of which, like Tlemçen and Constantine, owing to their geographical situation, had some persistence) united, if at all, for common enterprises of piracy. Kheir-ed-Din, in the name of the Turkish Sultan, sacked Algiers at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Spaniards, as we have seen, obtained foothold at various places on the coast, and, in fact, they controlled a string of *Presidios* from Ceuta to Tripoli long enough to hold up the course of Turkish conquests for some time, but Charles V failed to dislodge the Turks from Algiers or to prevent the spread of Turkish garrisons both along the coast and towards the interior. In 1536, Mohammed Hassan (the eunuch pasha) organ-

ized the country as a Turkish vilayet whose main revenues were derived from piracy. When the French occupied the city of Algiers in 1830, the treasury contained about two million pounds sterling in gold, whereas the total revenues of the state of Algeria did not exceed £175,000 a year. Piracy as a national industry was much more profitable than heartbreaking attempts to wring a living from a barren soil under a fickle sky.

In 1541 the Spaniards were finally defeated before Algiers. The waning power of Spain was thenceforth devoted to trying to hold the Netherlands and in suffering the wealth of the Indies to ruin her economy. There was not, until the eighteenth century, any Mediterranean power strong enough to challenge the pirates and their Turkish overlords. Algeria was divided into Turkish "beyliks" under a succession of Pashas who sat in Algiers as the representatives of the Sublime Porte. Algeria was, however, never a regular Turkish province even in the sense that Tunisia and Libya were. It was a profitable outpost whence toll could be levied on shipping. But all during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries sea traffic in the Mediterranean declined. The Turks had themselves closed the gateway to the East when they seized Egypt and the Algerine pirates had to go afield in their search for slaves and booty; they coasted as far north as Youghal. Naval "demonstrations" like that of Blake off Tunis in 1655 had little deterrent effect.

In 1710 the local janissaries arrogated to themselves the right to nominate their *Dey*, or commander, as Pasha, and thenceforth there was no direct Turkish representative in the country. The pirate state became practically independent. Its internal conditions went from bad to worse. Even the United States were at war with Algeria in 1783, and in 1815 the Washington government imposed its terms on the Dey. Since

that time the United States have taken a lively interest in North Africa affairs, not only because of their desire to uphold the freedom of the seas but because it has been increasingly realized that the South Atlantic might be dominated from Barbary. A combined Anglo-Dutch force bombarded Algiers in 1816. The French expedition of 1830 that was to result in the annexation of the whole of Algeria by France, was ostensibly despatched to avenge an insult proffered by the ruling Dey Hussein to the French consul. Algiers and a few other points were occupied by French troops. The Dey Hussein fled to Cairo, was there kindly received by the Khedive Mohammed 'Ali, and shortly afterwards died in convulsions.

It was the submission of 'Abd-el-Kader, the Sultan of Tlemçen, in 1847, that marked the really effective control of Algeria by the French, although Constantine had been taken in 1837 and Marshal Bugeaud had defeated the insurgents and their Moroccan allies at the battle of Isly in 1844. From 1850 to 1871—thus, during all the Second Empire—there were revolts, although the expedition under Saint-Arnaud to crush the Kabyles in 1851 was largely undertaken for political reasons to build up that second-rate soldier for the part he was to play in the *coup d'état*. In any case, the military reputation of the French generals from 1830 to 1856 was forged in the picturesque surroundings of North Africa (duly romanticized in the literature and drawings of the epoch).

The drought of 1866-7 brought Algeria to the brink of ruin, but the defeat of 1871 had no more effect on the situation than has the defeat of 1940.

After the Kabyle "rebellion" that was extinguished by August 1871, the confiscated lands were given to refugee Alsations and Lorrainers, while the dispossessed natives went to swell the slums of the growing towns and to furnish cheap labour. A revolt in the southern



part of Oran province was the last serious uprising with which the French have had to deal in Algeria. Since then the unrest has been of a more generalized and intangible form and it has grown with new methods of communication, new education, and new ways of life. The Algerian, however, at least the man of the north, has been profoundly influenced by four generations of French domination. Not only have the Algerians, in some measure, taken advantage of the incomparable intellectual training that France affords, but (and this must always be realized when weighing the results of French control) they have not been subjected to the continual irritation of social pretensions based on nothing but ephemeral official or commercial position. France has bred few "pukka-sahibs". It would be foolish to pretend that there is no friction between individual North Africans and individual Europeans. There is plenty; much of it, it must be confessed, due to the attitude of European women. That there is profound dissatisfaction with the political régime is also true, but there is little of the deep-seated repugnance that we by arrogance too often call forth or even that the French themselves evoked in their Indo-Chinese possessions. We shall be lucky if, after a victorious conclusion to the present war, we have as little difficulty, say, in India, as the French have had in North Africa after a most humiliating and devastating defeat.

Algeria is theoretically an integral part of metropolitan France, and until the downfall of the Third Republic it returned senators and deputies to the French Parliament just like any other French region. There was, however, one essential difference. Most of the inhabitants of Algeria had no vote. All the resident Frenchmen (there was of course no women's suffrage in France) and French-naturalized Europeans, all the Jews (even the native Jews) and all Algerians who had been naturalized French were able to vote, but the vast

mass of the native Algerians were not naturalized. Why not? we may ask. The answer is, that in order to obtain French citizenship the Algerian Moslem had to abandon Koranic law and submit himself to tribunals governed by the *Code Napoléon*, that is to say, to take only one point, to agree to live monogamously and to accept the French divorce law. In abandoning Koranic law the Algerian cuts himself off, in many ways, from the community of the Faithful—Islam is a self-contained system of law, dogma, religion, ethics, and science that admits of no defined infringement without damage to the whole. Hence came one of the constant factors of unrest and friction in Algeria exacerbated by the enfranchisement of the native Jews (whom the Moslems regard with feeling both of contempt and aversion) that had been effected by the Jewish minister Crémieux after the fall of the Second Empire.

A palliative measure was voted by the French parliament in 1919 whereby all natives over twenty-five years of age, who had served in the war or were landowners or farmers or holders of French decorations or could read and write and *were monogamous*, became automatically French citizens. Few came under the provisions of the Act. Algerians as well as all other Moslems regard the right to be polygamous as a touchstone of their religious liberties. In practice few Algerians can afford to be polygamous, but the closely dependent right to easy and frequent divorce they will, in no circumstances, give up. The Vichy government has reversed the provisions of the Crémieux Act enfranchising the Jews, but as there are now no elections the measure has little but symbolical significance.

Although Algeria is part of France, it is governed by a Governor-General under the control of the French Ministry of the Interior, but the Military and Naval establishments and the Finance and Education departments come under the relevant ministries in France.

The Southern Territories (that are not "Algeria" at all except politically) again, are under military command and the Governor-General has little or no control over them.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Vichy régime the same set-up has been maintained, but as all North Africa is under French martial law, the most important man is the commander of the troops, while the Governor-General of Algeria and the two Residents-General in Tunisia and Morocco are increasingly controlled by Admiral Darlan's dictatorship.

Going westwards by train you run all day from Algiers parallel to but some way back from the coast. After the first few hours of a slow journey you do not see much of the orange groves, olive plantations, and vineyards. The fertile area is small. The country gets wilder and you wind in and out of massive limestone rocks and up and down the side of bare hills patched with scrub. You leave Oran to the right and run through Sidi-bel-Abbès, formerly the headquarters of the now disbanded Foreign Legion. The town was founded in 1843 just before Bugeaud's victory at Isly, and it is, like Mannheim or Turin, laid out as a classical Roman rectangular camp city.

When you get to Tlemçen you are almost on the Moroccan border. The city is perhaps the most interesting in Northern Algeria and is full of a most mixed population of *hadar* (immigrant Moors), Arabized

<sup>1</sup> The Southern Territories cover no less than 767,435 square miles (as against 80,117 square miles for the three departments of Constantine, Algiers, and Oran in the north): the population of the three departments is about 6,500,000, of whom roughly one million are Europeans, of European descent or counted as such. Algiers (with about 270,000 inhabitants), Oran and Constantine have each populations of over 100,000. In all the vast Southern Territories of Aïn Sefrou, Ghardaïa, Touggourt and the Oases there are not more than 700,000 natives and not over 8,000 Europeans.



## VI. TOWN AND OASIS

1. CONVERSATION IN  
TETUAN  
(*Black Star*)

2. KORANIC SCHOOL  
NEAR BOU-SA'ADA  
(*E.N.A.*)



Berbers and *kulughi* or descendants of Turkish fathers and Algerian mothers.

If you continue with the train that left Algiers at eight-thirty in the morning, it is nine o'clock at night before you reach Oudjda, the first Moroccan town.

## CHAPTER IX

### MOROCCO

THE customs examination was always severe at the Moroccan frontiers, and since the collapse of France it has become much more searching. No immigrants are allowed into the Sherifian Empire from farther east, and the French newspapers of Rabat and Casablanca are full of accounts concerning the fines and imprisonments inflicted on native Algerians who have been discovered without their precious "papers" in order. The reason is, of course, that Morocco is full of refugees from France itself, and that it is being made the camp for as much of the French army as can be got across the Mediterranean. The population of the larger towns has greatly increased since 1939, and it is reported that that of Casablanca has more than doubled.

You are explicitly prohibited from importing into Morocco any photographs or other representations of "*Sa Majesté Chérifienne le Sultan du Maroc*"—perhaps because they might be used for magical purposes. This Morocco is evidently something quite different from the rather colourless and tame Algerian North. All the notices you see are again written (as in Tunisia, but not as in Algeria) in Arabic script. The Moors do not wear the flowing white burnous and high turban of the Algerians but a more close-fitting hooded garment generally dark in colour (at least in the country-districts)

and resembling in shape the ecclesiastical vestment known as a dalmatic. The harsh, hissing, clipped Arabic of the Moors strikes strangely on your ear.

You move through the "Taza Corridor" between the Rif and the Middle Atlas. In Morocco the mountain system is more complicated than in Algeria. The main ridge is constituted by the Great Atlas, roughly parallel to but farther south of it comes the Anti-Atlas<sup>1</sup> or Saharan Atlas from whose southern flanks run torrents that, before they lose themselves in the desert sands, water long strip oases. North of the Great Atlas comes the Middle Atlas that is still in some places fairly well wooded and is to this day the refuge of the little lions of Barbary.

The region known to the French as the "Taza Blot" was one of the last areas in Morocco to be subjected to the protecting power.

About five in the morning you get to Fez, that many people will tell you is the most interesting town in Morocco. The city sprawls its maze of narrow lanes and alleys over a broad valley. In spite of its medievalism and jostling movement, Fez is a singularly colourless place. It is a northern city with the greyness of the North and it is not the least grey when it bakes in the summer heat. Fez is not to be compared with Marrakesh for charm.

Meknès, on the road to Rabat, is of much more manageable size than Fez. It is a relatively modern city sheltered in and around the crumbling remains of a vast and flimsy imperial palace erected to rival Versailles by an eighteenth-century Sultan.

You are now well on the great Atlantic Moroccan plain, and heading for the ocean. The land is some-

<sup>1</sup> The Anti-Atlas follows the general direction of the whole Atlas Complex to the north-east. One branch merges into the Medjerda range in Algeria, while the other branch ends near Gafsa in southern Tunisia.

times undulating and even partly wooded. The population is sparse although you see on every hand evidences of French colonization and land settlement—farms, fruit orchards, orange groves, and plantations of young trees. There is a feeling in the air that the long-neglected countryside is, at last, being looked after.

Before you strike the sea at Salé you run through a rather clear forest and are soon under the old white walls of the Salli Rovers. Northwards the road stretches towards Petitjean (for what it is worth, the only oil-field in North Africa). Across the Bou Regreg river that divides Salé from Rabat, lies the administrative capital of Morocco, the seat of the Resident-General and the usual residence of the Sultan. On to the old walled Moorish town has been tacked a modern garden city that is pleasant enough. The extensive and (in the main) judicious building programme carried out by the French in Morocco was possible only because for years the great pro-consul Lyautey was undisputed dictator of the country where he used immense credits drawn on the military budget of defence, and not, therefore, subject to the usual scrutiny by parliamentary committees. The result is that French Morocco boasts modern cities that have sprung up as though by magic and they are undoubtedly the greatest wonder of the country. I know that coming rather late to Morocco after having visited nearly all the other lands of Islam I was frankly disappointed with the native cities and the over-vaunted picturesqueness of the land. Casablanca (in ten years transformed from a collection of huts and hovels into a great modern town with a magnificent port) and the European towns of Fez, Meknès, Rabat, and Marrakesh filled me with wonderment and admiration. As a critical and intelligent Spaniard said to me in Morocco last year: "Yes, it would be a fine thing for us to get all northern Morocco up to the line of the Sebu river, but where shall we find Spaniards to do for

us what the French have done?" Of course, all this achievement has been bought and dearly paid for. The indebtedness of the country is great, but in Morocco as elsewhere the inevitable devaluation that will follow on the war will wipe off most debts. The Moroccan franc that was worth 175 to the pound in August 1939 was in December 1941 being offered in Tangier at anything over 650 to the pound. Morocco has not escaped the curse of French colonies and protectorates—the domination of the great Companies and Interests. The *Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas*, for instance, directly or indirectly controlled perhaps half the economic life of the Protectorate. The Germans have, of course, bought themselves into most of the important French banks by means of the false money that they have made legal currency in France. Thus their financial and economic control of Morocco grows daily as does that of all French North Africa. Under German inspiration the great French banks are being encouraged to extend their operations in North Africa. The Bank of Algeria was authorized in December 1941 to increase its note circulation from three to ten thousand million francs.

Southwards from Casablanca you leave the coast, and in five hours you are in Marrakesh, the southern capital, white and reddish brown from Saharan dust, among its palm groves and against the background of the immense serrated snow-capped Atlas.

Beyond the Atlas lies the desert scored by the oasis valleys of the Sus and the Draa. The mountain range is dotted here and there with the gigantic *kasbahs* or strongholds of the feudal chieftains. These fortresses (that look so like the high buildings of southern Arabia, or in their massive battened masses remind you of the Potala) are relatively modern.

The greatest monarch of the present dynasty was Mulay Ismail (it was he who raised the palace-city of Meknès to rival his contemporary Louis XIV). He



created the Imperial Black Guard of 14,000 men (it still exists as a Guard of Honour for the Sultan), that he made the instrument of his power's extension. He recruited the Oudaias as a standing army, and he ordered the construction of the *kasbahs* of the Atlas to serve as advanced posts of imperial authority. When the strong hand of Mulay Ismail was removed, the *kasbahs* became, like the Norman strongholds of England, centres of resistance to the Sultan's government (*makhzen*) and fastnesses of local rulers. Of these great feudal nobles, some have survived and El Glaoui, the Pasha of Marrakesh, is still the most influential subject in the realm.

In these mountainous districts of the south (as in the northern Rif) the population is pure Berber, and the "Chleuhs", as the French collectively call them, follow their own laws and customs. The Western Berbers of Morocco can be divided into three groups: first come the wild mountain warrior tribes of the Rif. Then there are the southern Berbers, some of whom (such as the Braber) are sheep-herders and horse-masters, while others (for instance the Chleuh and Masmudah) are fully sedentary. The Arabic-speakers of the plains make up a fairly homogenous population not unlike (in feature if not in dress and comportment) the "Arab" population of Eastern Barbary. Some of the "Sherifian" families (or those claiming descent from the Prophet) often have members almost blond. The negro admixture is very noticeable all over Morocco except in the mountains.

It was the tardy recognition by the French that they had to deal in Morocco with two distinct peoples: on the one hand, the Arabized inhabitants of the towns and lowlands, and the true Berbers of the mountains on the other, that led, some years ago, to the promulgation of *dahirs* (imperial decrees) by which Berber traditional law and custom were recognized as alone valid for

the Berber populations while Koranic law remained applicable to the sedentary populations of Arabic speech. This attempt to divide and rule, with its obvious intention of keeping the two parts of the Moroccan people apart, has met with fierce opposition from the Moroccan nationalist parties. The policy is represented as an insult to Islam and it serves admirably as one of the necessary constant grievances that all agitators need.

The French Resident-General is the Sultan's Foreign Minister, and as such receives the only foreign representative still accredited to the Imperial Court—the American Minister (who resides in Tangier)—for the United States have steadfastly refused to recognize either French or Spanish protectorates in Morocco except *de facto*, and, consequently, to renounce those extra-territorial and capitulation rights which other nations, including Great Britain, so lightly and so inadvisedly gave up after the 1914-18 war.

The Sultan's *makhzen* (government) consists of a cabinet presided over by the Grand Vizier (for many years past the now nonagenarian El-Mokri) and composed of the Viziers of Justice, of Religious Foundations, the President of the Sherifian High Court and the Religious Court. The real administration of the country is entirely in the hands of the French. The Resident-General is at the head of an elaborate bureaucracy, and government is by means of "imperial" decree whereby has been created a large body of modern law without any violent change from the old system having been visible to the multitude. The French administration is a complete autocracy more rigid than that of any modern Tsar of Russia. The people have few guaranteed civil rights nor any semblance of self-government. The anomaly of a battered and defeated French government completely controlling the supposedly absolute monarch, is one that can hardly long survive.

We have seen how in 788 the representative of the Caliphs was expelled from Morocco. The native Idrisid monarchs who founded the first dynasty of independent Moslem Moroccan sovereigns, built Fez in 806, and the city soon became the spiritual and the economic capital of *Maghreb-el-Aqsa*. The authority of these early sultans, was, of course, like that of nearly all their successors, confined to the lowlands. In 895 the Idrisids were supplanted by a native Berber dynasty that did not even pretend to be "Arab".

Meanwhile in Spain the Caliphate that had been founded at Cordova in 756 by a descendant of the dispossessed Caliphs of Damascus came to an end in 1091. A few years before (in 1056) there had appeared in Morocco a "prophet" whose followers called themselves *al-marabtin* (that is "men who live in an outpost", *sc.* in newly Islamized lands). Marrakesh was built by them in 1062, and when the Cordova Caliphate was seen to be waning, the Almoravides (as we call the *al-marabtin*) overran Moslem Spain and extended their empire over the eastern provinces of the Maghreb that had been just evacuated by Norman conquerors. Thus the rulers of Moslem Spain never subjugated Morocco. It was the Moors who conquered Moslem Spain. The crushing defeat that was sustained by the successors of the Almoravides (the Almohades) at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 was, however, followed by the disintegration of the Moroccan empire. In 1257 Almohad rule came to an end in Europe and little by little the Moslem realm in Spain shrank to the mountains of Andalusia. The Almohads lingered on a little longer in Morocco, but in 1269 they were overthrown by the Merinids and thenceforth the Moorish sultans have ruled only over Morocco. But the long and close connexion between Morocco and Moorish Spain explains why the Spaniards have always looked upon the control of Morocco as the logical sequel of their *Reconquista*.

The present reigning family was cradled in the Tafilalet oasis over the Atlas on the Sahara side. By a manifestly forged pedigree these Alawite Sultans claim direct descent from the Prophet, and the French Moroccan Press on occasion refers to Mohammed as "the illustrious ancestor of His Majesty"!

The Sultan not only uses the title of *Emir-el-Muminin* or "Commander of the Faithful" (which rightfully belongs only to the Caliph) but he is invested with a peculiarly Moroccan sacredness that well illustrates the strain of pre-Islamic things that runs through Moroccan life. He is full of *baraka*, that is the immanent virtue which holy personages and men of holy descent possess in an especial degree. Saintliness in the Maghreb has little to do with moral conduct. Saints are "lucky" men who are revered for their magic power more than for the formal piety that may have aided them to become magical. *Baraka* is a delicate thing. It can be lessened and it can be polluted. It can be lost and it can be acquired. Like all the vague things in the realm of magical religion, it is best recognized by results. When the crops are abundant and the women bear healthy children, then the ruler's *baraka* is made manifest. *Baraka* can be transmitted from man to man by ceremonies the essential part of which is spitting into the mouth of him to whom you would convey the power and virtue. The Sultans of Morocco are not only very rich in *baraka* because of their exalted office but also because they are hereditary saints as *shurifa* or (supposed) descendants of the Prophet. The former Sultan 'Abd-el-Aziz (deposed a generation ago by the French) might have been thought to have lost a measure of his *baraka* when he lost his throne, but no. Only a few months ago I followed him up the streets of Tangier and watched the crowds throng him to touch his arm and kiss the hem of his garment. His Majesty gave no indication by so much as a twitch of an eyelid that he

was aware of anyone but his gentleman-in-waiting by his side.

Only in the coastal regions and in the Oudjda district is the administration of French Morocco civil. Elsewhere it is to all intents and purposes, even in peacetime, a military control. In the regions subjected to the army there are, of course, no foreign consulates. The system that the French inherited from the native administration of governing in the South through the Great Kaid (or feudal chiefs) is weakening, and only the Pasha of Marrakesh retains any real authority.

You realize the broadness of Morocco compared with the strip of fertile Algeria and Tunisia if you travel from north to south of the country. It is a long way from rainy but barren Tangier on the extreme north-western tip of the northern Horn of Africa to the real desert beyond the Anti-Atlas. Northern Morocco is for all the world like an inverted edition of southern Spain, and it is as far from Tangier through Rabat and Casablanca to Marrakesh as it is from Algeciras to Madrid. And at Marrakesh you are by no means in the Sahara (that is, beyond the mountains, a rocky plateau with little sand); you must traverse or circumambulate the lofty Great Atlas before you are at Tazenakht or Tamegrout, although eastwards the desert reaches sharply farther north. It is five hundred miles as the crow flies from Tangier to Tamegrout. You are but one hundred and fifty miles in a direct line from Ksar-es-Souk in the Tafilalet oasis beyond the Atlas ranges to Villa-Sanjurjo on the coast of Spanish Morocco.

It is this north-western region that seems to be a danger zone. The Mediterranean coast of the Sherifian Empire (save for a small patch at Port-Nemours near the Algerian frontier) is a Spanish protectorate.

As you move northwards from Casablanca the coastal plain grows narrower. You pass near the ruins of Volu-

VII. SPANISH  
MOROCCO

1. COUNTRYWOMAN  
(*Black Star*)

2. GRAND VIZIER OF  
THE KHALIFA  
(*Black Star*)



bilis (that was the only Roman town—with the possible exception of Tingis [Tangier]—of importance in Mauritania). Near the international border is Wezzan, the headquarters of the Taibiyah religious confraternity that is one of the most powerful in western Islam.<sup>1</sup> Then you are soon in the first Spanish town, a dusty straggling place called Alcazarquivir. Near here the Portuguese penetration of Africa was definitely checked in 1578 when Dom Sebastião, the last but one of the Aviz kings, was defeated and killed. You soon realize that you are no longer in the French protectorate. The country looks bare and empty. The villages shabby and ill-kept. The road passes through Larache on the sea and thence forth right up to the environs of Tangier, with the exception of the old Portuguese town of Arzila (that seen from afar looks quite picturesque) the countryside is uninviting. To the right, the country rolls up to the foothills of the Rif.

The Spaniards, who retained the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta when Portugal regained her independence in 1640, have ever since, in a sporadic way, made attempts to extend their influence on the southern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar. In 1860 O'Donnell took Tetuan and the small peninsula of Melilla (that, like Ceuta, counts as an integral part of metropolitan Spain) farther east was occupied a little later. Not much more progress was achieved until the early years of this century. As far back as 1905 Wilhelm II made his entry into Tangier uncasily perched on a white stallion from the Sultan's stable and proceeded to the German Consulate where he held a sort of court and uttered some characteristically tactless remarks. German engineers, prospectors, and commercial firms (of which that of the Mannesmann Brothers has become a by-word) had been at work in Morocco for years. The obviously

<sup>1</sup> The Sherif of Wezzan in the 70's of the last century married an English woman who died at a great age in Tangier in 1942.

impending collapse of the Sherifian government and the powerlessness of the neighbouring European to do anything about it, whetted the German appetites.

International rivalries and bickerings that became acute after the German Kaiser's visit, led to the holding of the Algeciras conference in 1906, ostensibly to extend aid for the perpetuation of Moroccan independence. In effect, the special interests of Spain and France in the Moroccan area were recognized. The French took advantage of a more than usually violent wave of disorder in the country to land troops and to proceed to the occupation of some of the main strategic points in the land. On March 30th, 1912, a Treaty of Protectorate was concluded with the Sultan. Foreign powers were guaranteed the continued existence of their capitulation and extra-territorial rights, and the French had to agree to a flat customs rate whereby no preferential treatment could be extended to any country. The result was that in Morocco you could buy the produce of almost any country cheaper than in its place of origin.

On 27th November, 1912, a treaty was concluded between the French and Spanish governments whereby the Spanish zone of protectorate (in the original conversations the Spanish border was to have reached as far south as the line of the Sebu river and to have included Fez as the principal town) was reduced to the mountainous savage region of the Rif that was, before it was subdued, to cost so much blood and treasure and to contribute to the downfall of the Spanish monarchy.

Tangier city and an area of some one hundred and forty square miles around it abutting both on the Strait and on the Atlantic was excluded from the Franco-Spanish agreement and made into a queer sort of international republic unique in the world. The Tangier region has been ever since the happy stamping-ground of a strange collection of men and women of all nations who consider that they can there live cheaper, with



more dignity and possibly with more safety, than at home. After the Four Years' War the Germans were excluded from consular representation in Tangier and from their part in the administration. The large building on the *Zoco Grande* where Wilhelm II held court was handed over to the *mendub* or resident representative of the Sultan.

A few days after the collapse of France in 1940, Spanish troops occupied Tangier (against all international conventions); the *mendub's* palace was handed back to the Germans, the *mendub* himself expelled, the international administration liquidated. Sherifian "authority" is now represented by a Pasha appointed by the puppet *Khalifa* (or viceroy) of the Spanish zone. Great Britain has, perforce, recognized the temporary *de facto* Spanish occupation and has secured the retention (for how long it is not clear) of some of the old prerogatives. The United States has refused to recognize in any way the *fait accompli*.

The highway south from the city to the French line of demarcation is the only really first-class road in Spanish Morocco, although the route from Tangier to Tetuan and on through the mountainous heart of the Rif is not bad. You certainly get from it some of the finest mountain views to be seen anywhere, but the country is a wilderness of rock. Some miles south-east of Tetuan is the barrage of Uad-Lau that supplies electricity to most of the Spanish zone and is the only public work of any importance undertaken by the Spaniards; then comes Xauen, a town founded in the fifteenth century by refugees from Granada and until 1920 untrodden by infidel feet. Still farther east is the little settlement of Ketama, six thousand feet up, where in 1936 Franco launched his revolt. Thereafter the road winds down to the sea at Villa-Sanjurjo, touches Melilla, and eventually joins the French frontier whence there is road communication to Oudjda.

The position in Morocco has been profoundly changed by the Spanish occupation of Tangier. The whole southern shore of the Strait is now in the hands of a Power very friendly to Germany. In southern Morocco, between the last spurs of the Anti-Atlas and the Ocean, the Spaniards hold the enclave of Ifni which they occupied in 1934. The Spaniards also enjoy some treaty rights in the Draa valley and round about Cape Juby, but these southern territories were of no account (they are mostly desert) until it suited the Germans to suggest the occupation of Tangier and to fill the Spaniards' heads with vaporous ideas concerning Spain's new Imperial Mission to be accomplished with German help. The Spaniards and their German friends now have a foothold both north and south of the French zone. As an earnest of their intentions, the Germans have encouraged the Spaniards to press the harassed but still subtle and temporizing French for a revision of the 1912 pact so as to give the Spaniards all northern Morocco up to the line of the Sebou river. It is reported that the French have agreed to these terms—to be executed after the end of the present war. . . .

The Germans have, however, no great confidence in the Spaniards. As the German Consul at Tangier put it a short time ago in private conversation: "If the British win this war, the Spaniards will be cleared out of Tangier. If we win they will be pushed out quicker than that." The Spaniards have little of the colonizing and organizing ability of the French. Tangier has gone rapidly downhill since June 1940, but if the Spaniards were as competent as they are self-confident, their Morocco would be an earthly paradise. It now seems, however (although the Germans will, true to their old methods, continue to play off the two peoples against each other), that the German plan is rather to seek the collaboration of the French. Should the Nazis succeed in their plan of controlling the French in North Africa,

and North Africa through the French, we may be sure that we shall hear little of the new great Spanish African Empire.<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER X

### THE FUTURE OF BARBARY

HERE, then, is the background of Barbary. What will be its political future? To answer that question, we must, of course, know whether France will be, in our time, really free again. We in Britain have known, during the centuries, all sorts of faces of France, aggressive, sulky, friendly, unfriendly and indifferent, but never that of a France enslaved. We can, however, strive to see what are the political possibilities inherent in the situation.

North Africa has not escaped that excitement and ferment which have been experienced since the Four Years War by all the Moslem world and in particular by the Arabic-speaking countries.

Islam is, undeniably, something which transcends speech and most Moslems do not speak any sort of Arabic (as their native tongue at least) even if the language is for them what Latin was to the medieval world of Europe. Wherever, nevertheless, the code of the Koran is reinforced by the everyday use of a

<sup>1</sup> The area of the French zone is 153,870 square miles, and that of the Spanish (including Tangier) only 13,350 square miles. At the last census the population of French Morocco was 6,298,528, that of the Spanish Morocco (plus Tangier) some 860,000. The populations of European origin have greatly increased in both protectorates since 1940. No towns in Spanish Morocco are of any great size. Casablanca in French Morocco is estimated to-day to have over 300,000 inhabitants, and thus to be after Cairo and Alexandria the largest town in North Africa and by far the largest in Barbary.

language that is closely related to the tongue of Revelation, the ties between the communities of the Faithful become closer. If due regard be had to inevitable local prejudice (such as exists between county and county in England or as between English and Scots or British and men of the Dominions) a Moslem is at home anywhere in Islam, but a *Maghrebi* is accepted in Syria or in Egypt<sup>1</sup> in a more immediate way than is, say, a Turk in Moslem India.

That is one side of the medal. On the other you have the fact that, since the last war, nationalistic spirit has grown in all Moslem states (most of which have acquired or have strengthened their independence since 1918). The very concept of Nationality, at least in its present-day form, as something exclusive is, of course, a new one in Islam, and it smacks of unorthodoxy and dangerous modernism to the old-fashioned. Nowhere in the Arabic-speaking world, however, has religion been rejected by the State (as in Turkey) and even the most "advanced" thinkers in "Arab" countries feel that Islam is their own thing—much as even the most free-thinking Italian regards the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

The leading "Arab" state is, of course, Egypt. Because of its wealth and culture it serves as a beacon to other Arabic-speakers, especially in Barbary. If we reflect that all the Arabic talkies, all the Arabic gramophone records, all the broadcasts in Arabic (that are not obviously propaganda) come from Cairo and that the *élégantes* of Tunis (when they do not wear the robes of Paris) imitate the manners and fashions of Egypt, and that even the few women of the more prosperous class in far-off Morocco who dare to walk abroad strive to look as Egyptian as possible in colourful *jellaba* of mascu-

<sup>1</sup> The speech of the men of Fez in Morocco is to that of the people of Yemen in Arabia as is Swedish to Norwegian or as Spanish to Portuguese.

line cut, we shall begin to realize what Egypt means for Barbary. Far out into the desert of the Algerian South my camelman told me that he had visited Cairo and that he had not believed that anything on earth could be so magnificent and impressive. He had worked in Paris and spoke quite good French.

Now, Egypt has a Constitution (there was a near riot in the Tunis movies when the film of King Farouk's enthronement was projected, and among the phrases of the oath of fealty to the Constitution came, from the screen, the fateful word "*destour*"), Egypt has a parliament, Egypt has an independent Moslem monarch, Egypt has foreign diplomatic representation (and so have Iraq, Sa'udi Arabia and now Syria) . . . why not Tunisia, a land with definite traditions and national history? Why not the Sherifian Empire of Morocco? What about Algeria? Why should broken France not do what victorious Britain did long before this war?

But we must not imagine that North Africa is on the brink of mutiny. The mass of the people remains pretty indifferent to political issues and concerned mostly with the problems of daily bread.

There has been, up to now, no shortage of essential foodstuffs in French North Africa, and much indeed has been and is being exported to metropolitan France (to take the place of what has been seized by the Germans); Algeria had no bread cards up to the end of 1941. In Tunisia up to the same date there reigned (thanks to good harvests) a certain abundance. Prices remained ridiculously low, calculated in gold, and only in a very slight degree shot up to counterbalance the vertical drop in the value of the French and Moroccan francs on international markets.

Up to the end of 1941 the rise in the cost of living did not, in all probability, exceed more than 40 per cent in either France or North Africa, although as wages remained almost stationary the increase in prices was felt

keenly enough by the poorer classes. There were, however, nowhere in the French zone the high prices endured in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco. In the autumn of 1941 you could still get an excellent meal in one of the better restaurants of Casablanca for 50 francs (or less than 1s. 6d. in our money). In Tunisia prices were even lower—bread 2.90 (or say 1½d.) a kilogram of more than two pounds, beef 17 francs a kilogram, chickens 16 francs (or perhaps 8d.). Fish from 8 to 22 francs a kilogram. Fresh vegetables and fruit are nearly always cheap and abundant in Tunisia. Olive oil, at the same period, was, it is true, short in Morocco (where the yearly consumption is only 12,000 tons a year) owing to hoarding and exportation. All vegetables were plentiful (Moroccan-grown potatoes taking more and more the place of imported rice). Millions of bushels of Moroccan wheat have gone to France, but General Noguès, the Resident-General, declared in 1941 that not a bushel of Moroccan wheat or a pound of Moroccan meat had gone to the Germans—perhaps, or, at least, not directly. There is a wool shortage all over North Africa (nearly all the natives in the country districts are clothed in home-spun garments or at least garments made from home-grown wool), but this has been because of German “buying” up. The shortage of cotton cloth for women’s clothes has been acute, and prices fantastically high, but what had worried the French authorities most was the scarcity of tea and sugar (almost necessities of life throughout North Africa and especially in Morocco) and it was here that American aid helped to tide over a difficult time—or at least put off the day of acute difficulties. Food, consumers’ goods and manufactured articles were regularly dispatched to Casablanca from the United States during the period between March and December 1941.<sup>1</sup> The distribution of the supplies (which were bought and

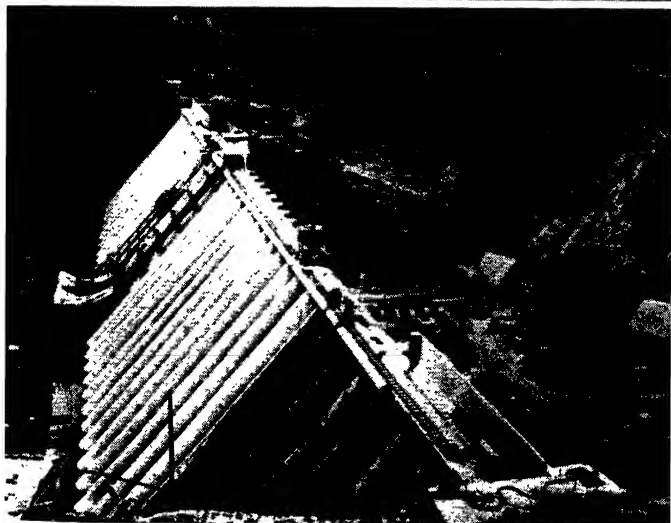
<sup>1</sup> The supplies were resumed for a short time early in 1942.

paid for and in no way constituted a gift) was controlled by American consular officials.

The economic conditions in North Africa, therefore, have not been, up to now, such as would unbearably provoke the native population. The men of Barbary would only break into open rebellion if there existed an active, thrusting Moslem Power armed and equipped to beat Europeans on their own ground—a Moslem Japan, but there is not likely to come into being for a very long time another imperial Turkey, and the French lose no opportunity, despite the “collaborationism” of Vichy, of telling, quietly, their North African subjects all about Germans.

The internal political situation varies from country to country, and although the leading nationalist parties in the three states have adopted parallel if not identical programmes for a restored and unified “Arab culture” in “a united Maghreb culturally linked with the Arabic-speaking lands of the Levant” (whatever that may mean when translated into a practical plan), there cannot be said to be any co-ordinated and intelligible general policy or indeed any at all, except that tortuous and opportunist one given by German impulsion and translated by German agents such as Sheikh Arslan.

Tunisia is a subtle land with (what is lacking in Algeria and Morocco) an educated, numerous and wily *bourgeoisie*, and the Tunisians are pre-eminently men of peace. The flare-up of 1938 (fomented largely by Italian and other foreign monies) would never have occurred had there not been a feeble government in Paris and a most incompetent Resident-General in Tunis. The Italian efforts to exploit the national movements in Tunisia met on the whole with little success either before or after the armistice. The *Destour* both “Old” and “New” has not made much headway since 1938. These two nationalist movements (*destour* is a Persian word meaning “custom”, taken into Arabic to



## VIII. PROGRESS

1. SALT PANS NEAR SFAX (*Paul Popper*)
2. OUED-KSOB BARRAGE, FRENCH MOROCCO (*Wide World*)



mean "constitution") were in agreement (at any rate up to the fall of France) as to the necessity for local autonomy and home-rule. They probably would like to get independence now, but they have much fear of Italian domination backed by Germany, since all Tunisians shudder at the thought of what Graziani did in Libya, and the wiser of them know what Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* about "*Halbaffen*". The Tunisians are very apt to act, in French phrase, *à l'anglaise*, that is to say, to take the money and to do nothing for it.

The "Old Destour" is centred around the 'ulema (doctors of the Law) at the Zeitouna Mosque, and the whole movement (much influenced by the astute Sheikh Tayyib) is tinged with conservative, supra-national orthodoxy. The "New Destour" is the party of the Paris-trained, smart-alecky lawyers. It is not, of course, openly anti-religious, but it is distinctly "modern" and laic in tendency and all for the machinery of bureaucratic and "democratic" government. Both movements were declared illegal after the 1938 riots. Both have gone to earth. Both have retained their essential organizations and are biding their time. Neither has many illusions about the Italians<sup>1</sup> whose prestige is at its nadir in the southern Mediterranean lands, in spite of the concessions the French have had to make, not only after but before their armistice. The present Resident-General has done much to pacify Moslem feeling, and by May 1941 out of 20,000 Tunisian members of the *Légion des Combattants* (Pétain's militia and the watchdog of the French "New Order") 12,000 were Moslems.

Algeria (that is, in theory at least, a part of France) has been subjected during the one hundred and ten

<sup>1</sup> Out of the 95,000 Italians in Tunisia, 23,000 were interned on the outbreak of war in 1939, presumably all those whom the Tunisian police suspected of Fascist proclivities. They were all released after the armistice.

years of French domination to all sorts of political and administrative experiments ranging from that of Napoleon III's "Arab Kingdom" to the directionless opportunism of the Third Republic. The Vichy Government, it is true, has removed one of the Moslem Algerians' standing grievances by disfranchising the Jews and by applying to them the repressive measures decreed in metropolitan France. But nothing much else has been done to satisfy the aspirations of the natives.

The Algerian nationalist groups have two avowed aims: internal religious reform and "unification" (i.e. the rounding-up and the bringing into line of the recalcitrant and semi-heterodox Kabyles and other Berber-speaking groups) and Algerian "independence". This religious reform and "unification" (which also constitutes a main plank in the Moroccan Nationalist parties' platform) is, alas, not solely inspired by motives of pure piety. It is rather part of a general scheme to combat French influence, since the French have at last discovered (what they would have found out at the Conquest had there been trained ethnologists a hundred years ago) that they have to deal, in North Africa, with two distinct ethnical groups—Berbers and Arabicized Berbers—and that if they treat them as two distinct peoples, no internal movement would ever be likely to lead to the ousting of the French from their North Africa. Foreign intrigues can be largely countered by stressing the obligation the schemers are under of promising to one group what must be anathema to the other.

Since Algeria has never formed a united nation in the past, and since all phases of Algerian life have been profoundly influenced by the French for the past four generations, the problems of Algeria are quite different from those of Tunisia, which has had a distinct national life since 1228. Had there been no defeat of France few

Algerians would have hoped for more than the extension of the franchise to Moslems, and local autonomy. To-day, the Algerians, as the Tunisians, are held in, first by the army and martial law, and then by fear of the alternatives to French domination. Once the war is over, however, all the pent-up nationalism will gush forth.

The mass of the people in Morocco is still wild and primitive enough to be ruled directly by French consuls, but the noisy obstreperousness of a small but very vocal class of "intellectuals" shows that things are moving fast, if largely under the impulsion of German and Spanish money.

What do the Berber-speaking and Berber-living minorities say to all this? In Algeria they do not say much since they are for the most part a minority leading primitive lives in secluded and out-of-the-way places. In Morocco, however, (where the Berbers form about 60 per cent of the total population) even their most Arabized fellow-countrymen are pretty lukewarm in their acceptance of the Nationalist programme. They realize that a government attempting to carry out this programme in full would at once antagonize the warlike mountain tribes and there would soon be a first-class civil war on hand. The "pacification" of the Moroccan Berber tribes is a recent and not very deep-rooted thing.

It is from the small urban minority of "educated" Moroccans greedy of graft, and avid of place, that the Spaniards and Germans draw the leaders, and from the urban proletariat that they draw the rank and file of such anti-French movements as the "Unidad Marroquí" of Mekki-el-Nasiri and in the "Moroccan National Reform Party" of Abd-el-Halck Torres and the Nationalist Defence Organization of Ibrahim-el-Wazzani that flourish in Spanish Morocco. The Germans hope to use all these puppet parties to put pressure

on the French, by creating a constant atmosphere of unrest.

If the French manage to maintain themselves in Barbary, how can they meet the demands of the native population and still preserve their ascendancy? In the ominous years just before 1939 some far-seeing Frenchmen sought the salvation of the French North African empire in the creation of a North African Dominion (with the retention of the native rulers, of course: if any ruler refuses to acquiesce there is always a pretender ready to be placed on the throne. The French finished off their Tunisian campaign so quickly in 1881 because they had a rival Bey in their baggage.) so that the whole thing would be a sort of Mediterranean India in which divide and rule could be played for a century: Arab against Berber, native states against French-Raj controlled territories, town against country, plainsman against mountaineer, Moslem against Jew . . . the whole to be held by a French army and cemented by an Arabo-Franco-Berber civil service. As circumstances pressed in, the clamour for political independence could always have been stifled by practical demonstration of essential economic dependence upon France and her empire and political representation doled out a little less fast than taxation was imposed.

The fall of France has made such things the memory of a dream, but even the totalitarian Vichy régime cannot help tinkering about with African administration and government. After General Weygand was dismissed at the end of 1941, a "General Secretariat for French Africa" was set up—of course under an admiral. Apparently, this is to be attached to the proposed "Council of Empire" that is to have advisory powers concerning all French overseas possessions (which at the end of this war can hardly comprise much more than those in Africa). It would seem that there is to be a diffusion of local control and more direct

government from France. But there is no chance at the present time of any such scheme receiving practical realization. Various changes have been effected locally, such as, for instance, the suppression in Morocco of the Third Electoral College (a constituent organ of the Government Council), one of the many committees with high-sounding names that the French multiply in their colonies chiefly as means of rewarding with titles local French colonists. Municipal Commissions have been suppressed. The "Corporative System" is to be set up and so on. Nothing has been changed that matters anything in the lives of the people, and the normal French habit of creating bureaus and proliferating into "commissions" and "committees" has been increased tenfold in the opportunist fumbling and pathetic impotence of servile France.

What the French have achieved in their North Africa, up to now, is, however, on the whole, worthy of praise. The population has greatly increased. Something, at least, has been done to parry and ward off the scourge of famine in bad years.<sup>1</sup> Health services are maintained although the menace of epidemics (such as typhus from the Moroccan South) is ever-present. It is not the fault of the French if there has been little industrial development. The French *bourgeoisie* have carried into North Africa some of the soulless and avid capitalism that helped to ruin France, but the French themselves supported what they exported. The educational advantages and opportunities of France lie open for all to seize and the French can never be reproached either at home or in their colonies with trying to keep the people ignorant. The moral and intellectual imprint of France goes deep. The prestige of France in the realm of the spirit is not, as yet, much impaired. Even her military

<sup>1</sup> Considering the difficulties, a good deal has been done for irrigation, and some constructions, e.g. the Oued Foddah barrage in Algeria, are remarkable.

collapse has had less effect in North Africa than might have been supposed. Her empire, as a whole, has never known her defeated (for in 1870 her most important colonial possession and almost her only overseas colony of importance was Algeria<sup>1</sup>)—the French empire was a sudden thing, the growth of forty years, and in that empire Barbary is something apart. Barbary is the only part of the French empire that is in the temperate zone. North Africa is a part of the Mediterranean, a part almost of Europe itself.

If French North Africa were to change masters, it would be a matter of deep concern for all the world, for who dominates Barbary controls the entrance to the Mediterranean, the best port (Bizerta) in the Inland Sea, and the Atlantic Coast that is nearest to America.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRANSAHARAN AND THE NEW ORDER

MUSSOLINI has proclaimed that the country of the White Man's future will be Africa. Even if his own adventures therein end in disaster, his words are still worthy of careful attention. In the German view (and it is the German view that we must appreciate in attempting to estimate the probable course of events in Africa) the Far East will emerge from this war dominated by Japan. There lies, however, much nearer to Europe than the Dutch East Indies or Malaya, another potentially inexhaustible source of tropical products and raw materials (although without the abundant labour of the East)—Africa.

<sup>1</sup> There were of course the American possessions, Cochin China, the Indian Establishments and Senegal, but they are of little account compared with the acquisitions of after 1870.

"Eurafrica" is a phrase that occurs often enough in German propaganda literature. Little doubt can be entertained that expansion into Africa is part of the Nazi Great Plan.

The interest that the Germans show in Africa is two-fold; a short-term, strategic interest and a long-term, economic interest. The Germans may drive through Spain, by-pass Gibraltar and secure a firm footing in Western North Africa, thus closing the Mediterranean to the British fleet, providing a base in Tunisia for their North African army and going far towards cutting off the other end of the imperial communications already amputated by the Japanese in the East. But the economic interest that the Germans display in Africa is not conditioned by any tactical or military considerations. The resources of even all Europe do not alone suffice the Germans. Not only would the control of North Africa make the German hegemony in Europe unassailable but the access to the riches of tropical Africa opened up by the control of North Africa would go far towards making the Reich the dominant, if not in the long run the sole, industrial centre in the white man's world.

So much for the dream. What of the reality?

The much talked of but little understood Transaharan railway project is, in this connexion, illuminating.

Men first began to talk about a Transaharan railway as far back as 1875 when a French engineer called Duponchel elaborated a scheme to link up the newly occupied southern territories of Algeria with the still half unexplored regions of the Niger basin. It was a typical French project compounded of far-sightedness, imagination, fantasy, and contempt for realities, together with a minute elaboration of detail—an example of what Cavour called "logic put to the service of passion".

Interested by Duponchel's ideas, M. de Freycinet, one of the most able ministers who ever served the

Third Republic, formed a mission to explore the proposed route (for no one, save by legend and hearsay, knew much of the *terrain*) and put Colonel Flatters in command. Flatters and his companions were, in 1881, murdered by the Touareg in the Hoggar mountains, and for thirty years nothing more was heard of a Transaharan railway.

In 1912, however, a private company called the *Société d'Etudes du Transafricain* was constituted with the avowed object of promoting a vast network of African railways of which the Transaharan was to be an essential link.

Then came the Four Years War.

During the war, not only had nearly all Morocco been pacified and an era of economic development apparently opened for French North Africa, but North African and West African products had been seen to be useful to France at all times and almost essential in time of war. Reconnaissance by air had been developed and the possibilities of motor traffic over what had hitherto been considered impossible surfaces had been determined.

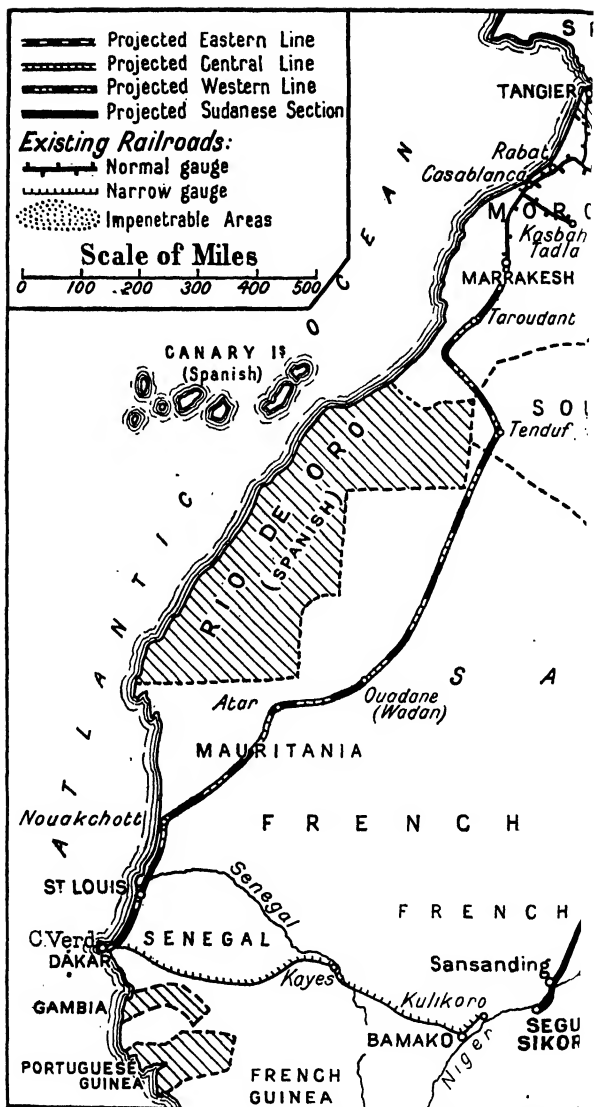
The Transaharan again began to be talked about.

On 7th July 1928 the French Parliament voted a law providing for a detailed study of the scheme. Four separate missions were dispatched to explore and to examine the two most likely routes.

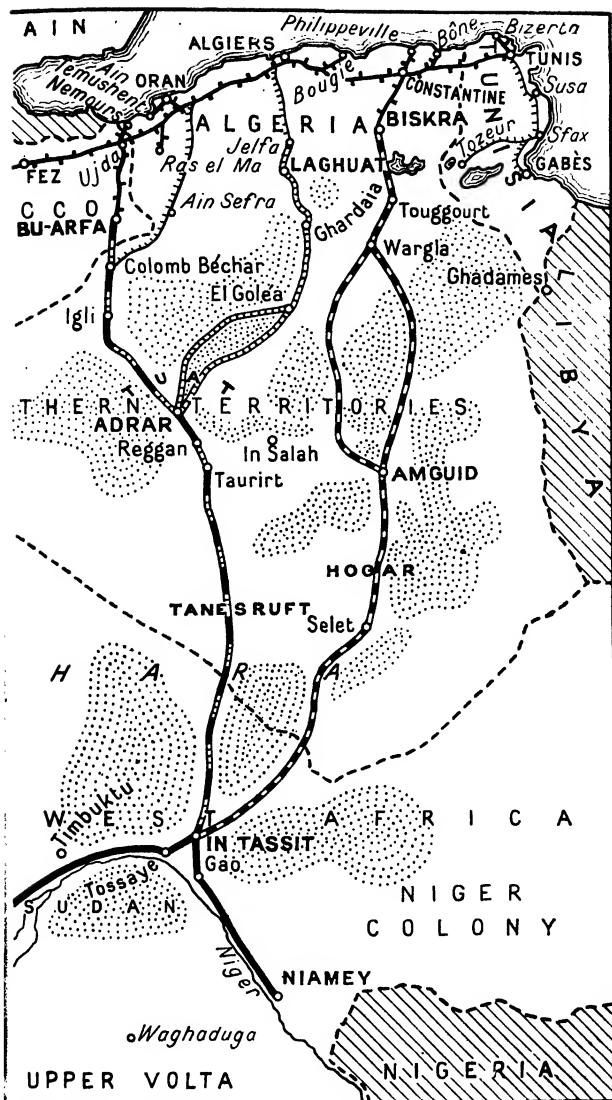
Considerable opposition to the whole project was, of course, encountered. Powerful political and economic interests supported alternative plans for motor lines or air communications.

In 1934 the Executive Congress of the Radical Party voted against the scheme and, officially at least, nothing more was heard of it until after the French defeat in 1940. In 1941 the Vichy government proclaimed that it had been decided to proceed with the construction of the line.





COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN



NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

Before we consider the route and the possibilities of construction it might be as well to glance at the vast region that would be tapped by the Transaharan. M. Berthelot, the Vichy Secretary of State for Communications, declared in April 1941 that "The Transaharan must not be considered as an end in itself but as a link between North Africa and West Africa."

The Niger Valley—if the river were controlled by irrigation works—might be compared with that of the Nile. There is not, of course, anywhere in French North Africa any area so rich. The Niger rises in the highlands of French Guinea, which is, for six months out of the year, a region with one of the highest rainfalls in the world. For the other six months no rain falls at all. Hence there is an extraordinary variation in the volume of water flowing along the Niger bed. In flood, the average amount of water is 7,000 cubic metres a second. At low water, barely 50. The river is sometimes a vast sea many miles wide and sometimes a sluggish stream meandering through dozens of shallow twining channels. The area thus subjected alternately to scorching and to flood is very extensive. In the one region of Macina, and on the left bank of the Niger, there are over a million and a half hectares (say, four and a half million acres) of irrigable soil.

For some years past the French have cherished a most ambitious scheme for regulating the course of the river. Several huge barrages were to have been constructed. The largest, that of Sansanding (downstream from Ségou), was to have been 1227 metres long and was originally due to be finished in 1940. Two little experimental barrages (those of Niénébalé and Sotuba) irrigate respectively 800 and 6,000 hectares. The whole programme was of great scope and the barrages alone would have taken fifteen years to finish.

The Niger basin is potentially perhaps the richest region of the French African possessions. All tropical

and sub-tropical and most temperate zone crops can be grown there with success—millet, rice, wheat, maize, cotton, tobacco, sisal, manioc, hemp, indigo, coffee, cocoa, and so forth. The adjoining forests yield all sorts of hard woods. Nut oil and rubber plantations could be greatly extended. The herds and flocks could be much increased. It is a land of promise; but up to now of promise only. To begin with there is a shortage of labour. The population of French West Africa is concentrated in the coastal regions<sup>1</sup> which are relatively overpopulated, and French West Africa, unlike Free French controlled Equatorial Africa, is in a state of economic depression and of social misery.

Now the economic usefulness of a Transaharan railway depends almost entirely upon the exploitation and development of French West Africa.

A prominent member of the *comité d'études* of 1928 estimated (in 1929) that at its beginnings the Transaharan would have no freight at all and only at the end of twenty-five years would the freight hauled amount to 300,000 tons a year! However, whatever may be the degree of comfort offered to potential travellers by Transaharan, no one is going to cross the Sahara by train for his pleasure. Tourists will use the air, and aeroplanes will continue to carry merchandise valuable for its volume. A great deal has happened since 1929. The French have lost their Far Eastern empire, possibly for good. It is being more and more realized—and not least by the Germans—that Africa is destined to become a reservoir of raw materials needed by Europe and European industry.

<sup>1</sup> The French are now (1942) at work on a scheme for connecting the town of Abidjan on the Ivory Coast with the sea by cutting through the sand bar that divides the Bassam lagoon from the sea and by dredging a deep channel through the long lagoon itself. The Ivory Coast is also a very rich region of tropical produce—manioc, bananas, rice, millet, maize, hard woods, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, cotton, &c.

Three routes for the Transaharan are possible. Two, only, would form quite distinct lines, since the third alternative route southwards from Laghouat in Southern Algeria through Ghardaia and El Goléa would join the western projected line at Adrar.

The eastern route would run southwards from Biskra in eastern Algeria through Touggourt and Ouargla to Amguid and then through the mountains of the Hoggar to In-Tassit. For purely technical reasons it seems that this line would present greater difficulties of construction than the western route from Bou-Arfa in south-eastern Morocco.

It is on the western line that work is now being done. The track from Bou-Arfa to the coal-mining centre of Kenadsa (just over the Algerian border near Colomb-Béchar) was to have been completed at the end of 1941. Work is now proceeding on the line from Colomb-Béchar to Beni-Abbès (200 kilometres due south). The route is Bou-Arfa (that joins up with the Moroccan line running north to Oudjda), Colomb-Béchar (the junction with the Algerian line through Ain-Sefrou up to Algiers) thence due south to Beni-Abbès and then over country that apparently (and exceptionally) presents some engineering difficulties, as far as Retten. Then come Adrar, Reggan and Taourirt. The line will thence cross the dreadful desert known as the Tanezrouft and reach In-Tassit. There the Transaharan would join up with the existing lines, westwards by Tasayé on the Niger to Timbuctoo and Ségou, and, eastwards, through Gao to Niamey far downstream on the Niger.

Some work is either going forward or projected in the Niger region. The In-Tassit line is being worked on and the Ségou section of the line to join up the railways from Dakar to Bamako and to Koulikoro is being completed.

The estimated time for construction was eight years, and this estimate seemed, even in peace-time, extra-

ordinarily optimistic. At present the French appear to be taking about eighteen months to lay down each section of two hundred kilometres. As the line will be three thousand kilometres long, it will not, at the present rate of progress, be finished for twenty years. To talk of a railway built in such conditions as being of strategic or immediate economic importance is nonsense.

The cost, in these days of autarky, controlled currencies, and forced labour (the French are using as workmen, in deplorable conditions indistinguishable from slavery, refugees, members of the disbanded Foreign Legion and others) is, of course, a secondary consideration. Fuel for the line, once it is constructed, is another matter.

The mines of Kenadsa are said to produce 100,000 tons of coal a year, and the official propagandists claim that this total could be raised to 1,000,000 tons. Electric traction has, therefore, been proposed. But how could the three thousand miles of track be bordered with pylons every fifty yards? Electric Diesel engines seem to be the only practicable solution. They use heavy oil<sup>1</sup> and only consume one-hundredth of the amount of water needed for steam engines, and you can have Diesel engines of 3,000 h.p. The actual construction work (save in some isolated districts such as the stretch from Beni-Abbès to Retten) seems to present no great difficulties. There need be but few infra-structures and the maintenance costs would be comparatively small. The great enemy of railroads is water. Nine-tenths of the expenses incurred for repairs to railways is necessitated by damp. The Transaharan would be so dry that metal sleepers with concrete ends could be used, and are in fact being used on the stretches already completed or in construction.

<sup>1</sup> The supply of fuels with a high cetane number seems to be, relatively, so small that sooner or later most high-speed engines will have to be adapted for burning lower grades of oil.

Ever since the Citroën expedition crossed the Sahara by motor-car in the 'twenties, it has been clear that, one day, regular automobile services would ply across the desert. A transaharan motor service is now maintained from Algiers to the Niger. After crossing the High Plateaux and descending to the border of the desert you go through the hill-country of Djelfa (the home of the famed Ouled-Naïl professional dancers) to Laghouat. Then comes Ghardaia and the Seven Cities of the M'zab people who are the Jews of Islam—a cunning, trafficking lot whom you find all over Barbary and even farther afield. Ghardaia lies on the edge of the western *erg* or desert of sand-dunes. Once through it, the so-called *kreb* or wilderness of bare switchback rocks stretches before you. It is a hundred degrees inside the car, and you do twelve hours a day. The trace of the track is often buried in drift sand blown up by the fierce burning simoom . . . In-Salah, Arak, and then Tamanrasset in the lofty dark mountains of the Hoggar, home of the Veiled Touareg, to In-Guizzam where there is a decent hostelry. The next stop is Agadès, and the line ends at Zinder on the British Nigerian frontier. From Zinder you can continue by car either westwards to Niamey or eastwards to Fort-Lamy in French Equatorial Africa.

It is a grim trip.

Motor traffic on this route has, however, been well maintained. In the last three months of 1940, 1,800,000 kilograms of freight and 1,600 passengers thus crossed the Sahara. The *Société des Produits du Tchad et du Niger* (one of the Chartered Companies whose monopolies and maladministration came in for so much criticism in France before the war) sends, by the motor route, cattle hides from the Volta region, Niger butter, vegetable oils, cotton, coffee, nut oil, and even a certain amount of wheat from the Air district. It may be imagined how great is the demand for these commodi-

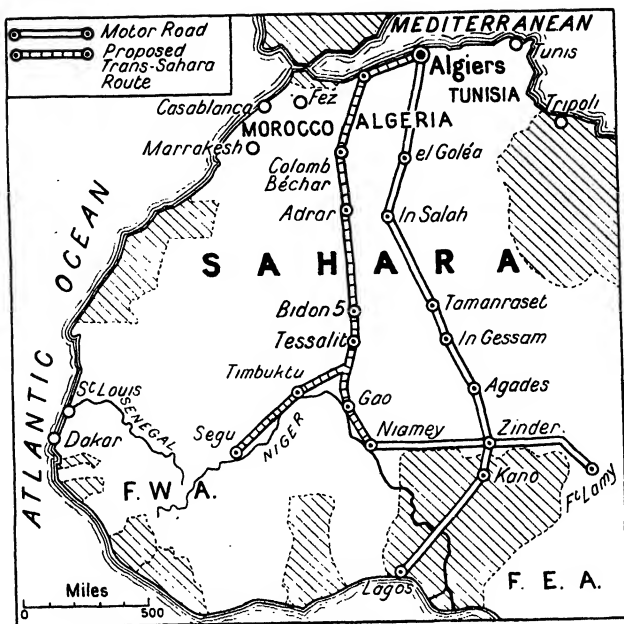
ties if it is profitable to send them by so expensive a route. The 3,600 kilometres are covered in fourteen days, but the utilization of motor vehicles for long-distance freight hauls across the Sahara is a war measure.

Since the armistice with Germany, the French have also made use of another north-south motor route, since, starting in March 1941, there has been a regular bi-weekly or even tri-weekly motor-bus service between Casablanca and Dakar. Six-wheeled "all-terrain" cars are used. The road runs south from Casablanca through Marrakesh in southern Morocco and reaches the coast again south of the Spanish enclave of Ifni, then it cuts inland to avoid the huge, half-unexplored but thirsty waste of sands known as Spanish Rio de Oro (there is no gold there) and reaches the sea north of St. Louis.

Since the removal of General Weygand from his post as High Commissioner in North Africa, the Vichy government has been reported to be converting a number of military troop-carrying aeroplanes into air-liners to ply between Lyons, Marseilles, Algiers, Oran, Casablanca and Dakar. The service is to be "better than the pre-war London-Paris service". . . .

Now what results from all this is that, as it is being at present carried on, the construction of the Transaharan is a distant dream. It is, however, now stated that German assistance is being "accepted" for the construction of the line. This probably means that the Germans are allowing the French to use some of the products of their own industry on the Transaharan, doubtless under the surveillance of Nazi representatives and experts. As it would seem that some two hundred new air-fields and emergency landing-grounds are being laid out along the route of the line the Germans doubtless intend greatly to develop the air-borne traffic across the great desert.





COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH SAHARA

## EPILOGUE

THE presence of a German army in North Africa changed the whole course of the war and it may well come to be held that the decision taken, at the beginning of 1941, to transfer men, material, and arms to Greece and not to pursue the beaten, broken, and demoralized Italians to the Tunisian frontier was, among all the strategic decisions made by Britain during the war, that which was the most pregnant with consequences.

Had it been possible fully to occupy Libya, French North Africa with its ports and coasts would have been largely under Allied influence.

There would have been no German army in North Africa.

Concurrently, however, with the German strategic drive towards Suez, the systematic pacific penetration of North-West Africa was intensified. If the Germans could not exercise upon the French in Barbary and in Occidental Africa the direct pressure they could apply to the Vichy government, they could and they did continue their programme of creating unrest within French territories and of keeping Franco-Spanish relations uneasy.<sup>1</sup>

The German Consul-General at Casablanca, for instance, not only imported arms (for possible use by Moroccan rebels) but he also subventioned the revolutionary leaders. Since, however, there could be no real menace of an uprising without trained soldiers (for the French maintained and indeed were reinforcing their North African troops) it can be understood why the French were not anxious for the release of the remaining North African war-prisoners and, also, why the Germans insisted on their being sent home.

As far back as 1938 in the *Jahrbuch für Auswärtige Politik* Bohle, the "overscas-German" leader, wrote, "The African policy<sup>2</sup> has given the metropolis additional security and this will continue as long as France can quite rely upon her possessions and as long as Spain, which controls the sea-routes on the French flank, renounces all active politics." Well, by burrowing from the inside, the Germans hoped to undermine French authority from within, and by inducing the Spaniards to adopt "active politics" the Nazis expected to get some very useful results from without.

Spanish Morocco, indeed, came increasingly under

<sup>1</sup> Within the French zones of influence, the Spanish official agents were largely under German control. Spanish consuls, vice-consuls, and consular agents are scattered about even in comparatively unimportant villages of French Morocco.

<sup>2</sup> *sc.* of France.

German influence and the Nazi net is flung much wider around the French African possessions. Even the numerous German fifth-columnists on Fernando Po and in Rio Muni (the Spanish territories adjoining the Cameroons and French Equatorial Africa) were under the orders of the Nazi *Gauleiter* in the Canaries.<sup>1</sup>

In the Ifni enclave and in the barren deserts of Rio de Oro Nazi agents were busy. The real centre of German intrigue, however, was probably Dakar. Here the German organization was under the energetic direction of Theo. Habicht, an old Nazi gangster.<sup>2</sup>

Dakar is not only a good point of observation for the neighbouring British possession of Gambia and the not far-distant base of Freetown, but the capital of Senegal is, first and foremost, in the Germans' calculations, a spear-head directed towards South America. It is not 1,850 miles from Dakar to Brazilian soil. On a fast modern aeroplane you can, therefore, take off from Africa in the early morning and have luncheon in South America.

It may well be, when all is said and done, that the Germans regard control of African territory almost more as affording a stepping-stone to South America than as an end in itself. The Germans have a word for it: *Brückenkopf-Theorie*—"Bridge-head Theory"—and we may be sure that it means something very present in the minds of the Nazi leaders, that the Iberian Peninsula, North-West Africa, and French Occidental Africa, constituting as they do a spring-board for the jump to Latin America, must be brought under full German control.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Still, in 1942, Kurt Borner, who had been in touch with the present ruling clique of Spain since 1936 when Franco was the Governor of the Canaries. The Germans do no switch their men about when they are doing a good job.

<sup>2</sup> Habicht arrived in Dakar soon after the bungled attack on the town by the Allies in 1940.

<sup>3</sup> One of the leading exponents of the "Bridge-head Theory" is General Faupel, head of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. Faupel was Hitler's first ambassador to Franco in 1936.

The Germans have, for years, been acutely "South-America conscious". They realize that were they victorious their opportunist Japanese allies would have as little use for them in Asia as for any other white people.

As for German plans in Africa there is, perhaps, much truth in the pronouncement made by a Nazi leader in January 1942:

"Germany", he said, "has no intention of installing herself in Africa, since for colonization she has the East.<sup>1</sup> No masses of men will be sent to Africa, but trained officials as well as people who are already there will be used. It is our aim to open up Africa with the help of the natives, whom we will treat in a fair and just manner. Germans will occupy the leading positions and instruct the natives in agriculture and handicrafts. Men of the black race will not be allowed to occupy important situations but certain rights will be guaranteed to them."<sup>2</sup>

Control of Barbary gives control of the Mediterranean, and the fertile regions of equatorial Africa that lie beyond the desert belt are a great storehouse of raw materials; but we must, perhaps, regard the lines of communication through and above the territories of North-West Africa primarily as part of the Nazi "New Line" to South America.

Apart from the "colonizing" possibilities of South America, the raw materials and the strategic importance of that continent, there is the South American market, in the development of which lies much of the economic future of Europe and North America. The Nazis want such a rich prize for themselves.

We may be sure, therefore, that they will make a very determined effort to control entirely the whole "Bridge-head" before this war is over.

<sup>1</sup> That is, of Europe, i.e. Russia.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. page 76.

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